Commentary

Volume Seventy-nine, Number Two, February 1985

The Terrible Question of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn
Norman Podhoretz

Politics, the Jews & the '84 Election
Lucy S. Dawidowicz

Can the Bishops Help the Poor?
Peter L. Berger

From Clapham to Bloomsbury: A Genealogy of Morals
Gertrude Himmelfarb

A Few Home Truths About Latin America
Luis Burstin

Kosher Ecology
Newtol Press

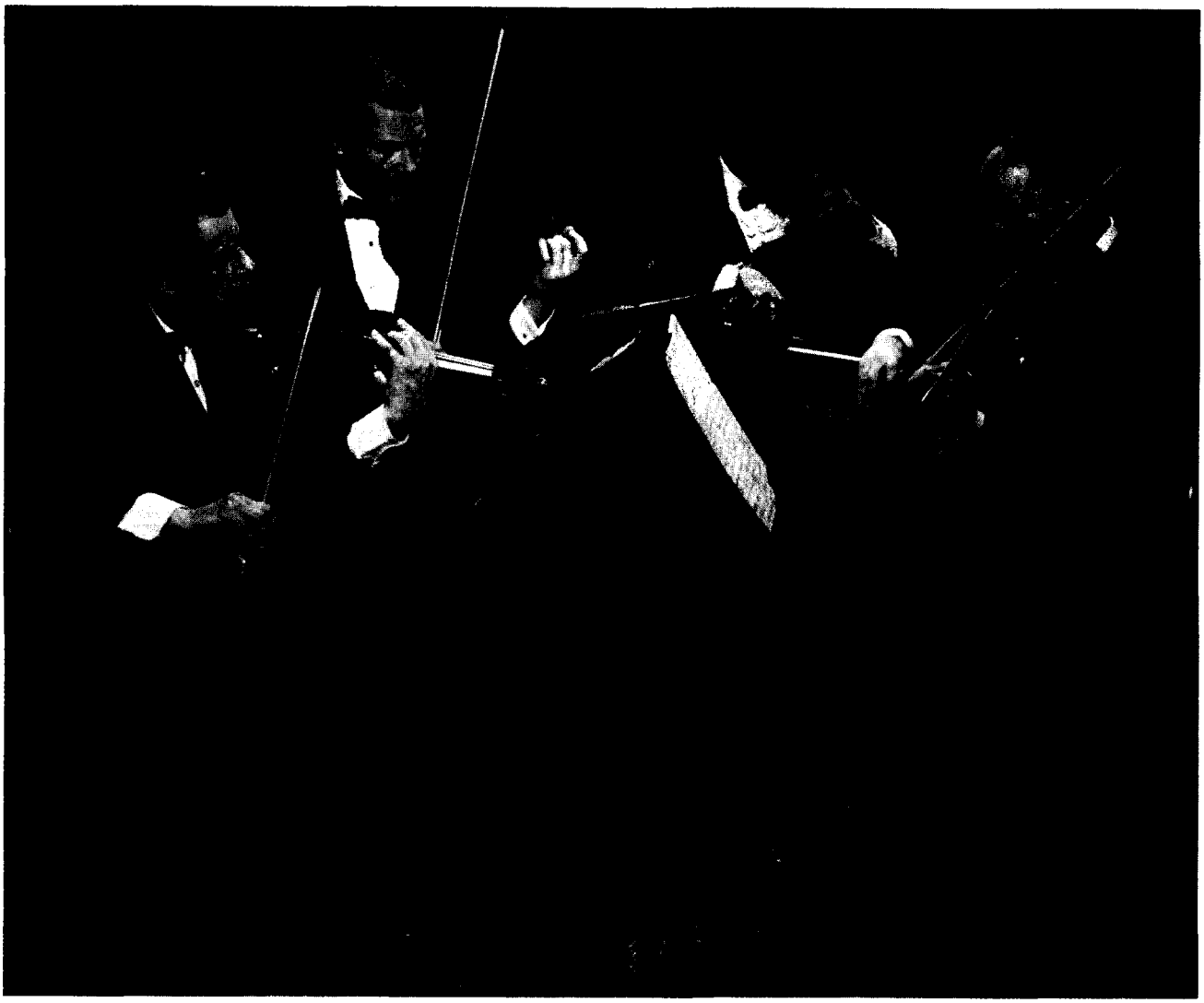
Heller's Last Gag
Roger Kaplan

Books in Review:
David Blair / Maurice Friedberg / Jeffrey Marsh / Joseph W. Bishop, Jr. / Larry D. Nachman

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE / $3.25

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"AT&T PRESENTS CARNEGIE HALL TONIGHT"



Juilliard String Quartet

This week and every week you can enjoy the excellence of Carnegie Hall on your radio.

In "AT&T Presents Carnegie Hall Tonight," some of the greatest soloists, ensembles, and orchestras of our time perform for you. Hosted by actor and composer John Rubinstein, this program hour also includes feature interviews, so you actually hear more than you would at a live performance.

This series is part of AT&T's continuing commitment to bring you great art and great artists.

AT&T

© AT&T 1984 Check local listings for the time and station in your area.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary

VOLUME 79 NUMBER TWO *FEBRUARY 1985*

Articles

17 The Terrible Question of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn *Norman Podhoretz*

25 Politics, the Jews & the '84 Election *Lucy S. Dawidowicz*

31 Can the Bishops Help the Poor? *Peter L. Berger*

36 From Clapham to Bloomsbury: A Genealogy of Morals *Gertrude Himmelfarb*

46 A Few Home Truths About Latin America *Luis Burstin*

54 Kosher Ecology *Newtol Press*

Fiction

59 Heller's Last Gag *Roger Kaplan*

Letters

2 from *Joseph Forbes, Albert L. Weeks, Doyne Dawson, Seymour Weiss, Craig Arden Spiegel, John Lantos, Kirk Bernstein, Martha S. Cherkis, Lawrence J. Kramer, David Solan, Franky Schaeffer, Mary Tedeschi, Samuel Rabinove, Walter Berns, Edward L. Killham, Richard Pipes,* and others

Books in Review

62 Deadly Gambits, by Strobe Talbott *David Blair*

64 The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto 1941-1944, edited by Lucjan Dobroszycki *Maurice Friedberg*

66 Turing's Man, by J. David Bolter; The Second Self, by Sherry Turkle *Jeffrey Marsh*

69 The Liberal Crack-Up, by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. *Joseph W. Bishop, Jr.*

70 The Minimal Self, by Christopher Lasch *Larry D. Nachman*

Editor: Norman Podhoretz

Executive Editor: Neal Kozodoy

Managing Editor: Marion Magid

Associate Editor: Brenda Brown

Contributing Editors: Robert Alter, Milton Himmelfarb, Walter Laqueur

Comptroller: Philip Shamis

Production Manager: Bruce Lodi

Circulation Manager: Helene Hansen

Cover: The Sheldon Group, Inc.

COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single copy is $3.25, $33 a year; 3 years $89; 5 years $132—Add $5.00 per year for all foreign, including Canada and Latin America—Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMENTARY, 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.
Copyright © 1985 by the American Jewish Committee; all rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions—Indexed in *Readers' Guide, Book Review Digest, Public Affairs Information Service, Index to Jewish Periodicals, ABC Pol Sci, Historical Abstracts,* and *America: History and Life*—Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.
EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Statement of Aims

In sponsoring COMMENTARY, the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY's contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of COMMENTARY by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Howard I. Friedman, *President*

The Commentary Publication Committee

Donald M. Blinken, *Chairman*

Morris B. Abram
Norman E. Alexander
Theodore Ellenoff
Edward E. Elson
Stephen Friedman
Lawrence Goldmuntz
Mark Goodson
Robert H. Haines
Lewis J. Laventhol
Bess Myerson
Robert L. Pelz
Ned Pines
Frederick P. Rose
Michael Saperstein
Nanette Scofield
Henry Sherman
John Slawson
Alan M. Stroock*
Laurence A. Tisch

**Honorary Member*

Letters from Readers

Arms Control

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I found Seymour Weiss's article on arms control superb ["The Case Against Arms Control," November 1984]. "Arms control" is probably the greatest misnomer of our time. Negotiations to limit the type and number of strategic nuclear weapons have no bearing upon whether or not the weapons are actually used for a strategic nuclear war. The dynamics of a strategic nuclear war would at most be peripherally and inconsequentially affected by so-called arms-control negotiations.

However, like gun control, arms control has tremendous emotional value. People fear nuclear war, don't like to have to believe that there is nothing that can be done against it, and gratify themselves by imagining that by marching in peace demonstrations, pushing for freezes, and demanding arms-control negotiations they are doing something to mitigate a great and imminent danger. This behavior is similar to that of primitive peoples using rituals to attempt to control natural forces like hurricanes and floods. . . .

The word "control" is semantically imprecise. Regulating the number of something is not truly equivalent to regulating the use of something. Controlling the number of strategic nuclear weapons is not the same as restraining the use of nuclear weapons. But people feel that by trying to control the number of weapons, they are controlling the use of such weapons in war.

It is difficult for many people to grasp the fact that strategic nuclear warfare between the United States and the Soviet Union is essentially self-preventing—as long as each side has sufficient weapons to destroy the other regardless of which side attacks first. Neither side is going to start a nuclear war if it knows it will commit national suicide by doing so. The advocates of arms control could conceivably bring on a war with strategic weapons if they brought about a situation in which one side or both sides possessed fewer weapons than the number needed for effective deterrence.

Of course, it is very unlikely, virtually impossible, that Soviet strategic nuclear weapons would ever be reduced to such a low level. The Soviets want us to reduce our nuclear weapons, but they don't want to reduce their own. Paranoia about the evil intentions of other nations causes the Soviet Union to want massive amounts of nuclear and conventional weapons. The Soviets also appreciate the political uses of nuclear weapons and other forms of power. It is incredibly naive to believe that the Soviet Union could be talked into giving up all, or even a significant part, of its nuclear weapons. . . .

One of the great myths of our era is that the only reason the Soviet Union acquired nuclear weapons was that the United States had them first. Actually, even if the United States had never shown any inclination toward nuclear weapons, the Soviets would have developed their own atomic and hydrogen bomb, albeit not as quickly. . . .

According to the myth of total American guilt for the Soviet nuclear arsenal, the Soviet Union has merely been responding to American weapons development; thus all the United States has to do is disarm and the Soviet Union, a cute little beagle puppy that our irrational fears and provocations have turned into a ravening werewolf, will disarm, too. . . . It is impossible to reason with people who hold such naive visions. . . .

It is true that the Soviet Union wants to survive and doesn't want a nuclear war. America shares a desire to survive and a desire to avoid nuclear war. But there are important differences between Soviet and American national character and behavior patterns that the arms-control/freeze enthusiasts refuse to acknowledge.

JOSEPH FORBES
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Seymour Weiss justly wonders why the media denounce the idea of our reestablishing broad military superiority over the Soviets. He might have pointed out that this denunciation is doubly galling when one realizes that the Soviets themselves, in *recent* military literature, call for military superiority on their side, to our disadvantage.

I will mention here merely two examples out of an abundance of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instances in Soviet military literature—in contrast to the propaganda put out by civilians for Western consumption—in which the claim is made that the Soviets must achieve and hold all-'round military superiority, including *specifically* nuclear assets (quantitatively and qualitatively).

Thus, in the 1976-80 eight-volume *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, under several headings, superiority in weapons and technology is advocated. Similar statements may be found scattered throughout the newer, one-volume *Military Encyclopedia Dictionary*. In both these works, there is even a separate article titled "Superiority Over the Enemy."

As Joseph Stalin was fond of saying, "Clear, one would think."

ALBERT L. WEEKS
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Seymour Weiss tells us that the USSR is "forging ahead in its nuclear programs," while the U.S. is engaged in a large military build-up that includes the modernization of its nuclear weapons to make them more effective. He draws from this the odd conclusion that "in no real sense has there been any such thing as an arms race." The conclusion would seem even stranger if he had provided his readers with any adequate statistics about the growth of American and Soviet nuclear arsenals over the past thirty years. This arms race is one of the most obvious facts of contemporary history, and, as Mr. Weiss points out, it continues to escalate.

Apparently, all that Mr. Weiss means by his bizarre statement is the perennial cry that the Soviets are taking a "lead" in one or another aspect of nuclear technology. I think that there is a rough but quite adequate parity between the two countries in strategic nuclear weapons—adequate to serve the purposes of deterrence, if deterrence can be secured that way—and there has been for some time. I think this is the opinion of most people who are well-informed about defense matters. Although I am ready to listen to arguments from the other side, these propagandistic scare tactics do not constitute an argument.

Mr. Weiss does not appear to understand the case for arms control. Such understanding should be a prerequisite for the construction of a case against it. In brief, strategic nuclear weapons are not weapons in any traditional sense. The U.S. and the USSR entered into arms-control negotiations for an obvious reason: they found they were unable to use these devices as instruments of policy, which is the traditional and sole function of armaments, and that the possession of these weapons incurred the danger of pointless annihilation. This danger increases with the arms race. The arms race, left to itself, will continue to escalate because that is the nature of conflict. The U.S. and the USSR have sought arms-control agreements because that is their only alternative.

It is true, as Mr. Weiss says, that the U.S. and the USSR have seriously opposed national interests,

We serve 123 cities in 71 countries around the world. One of these countries is Israel. When you fly to Israel or to any other Lufthansa destination, make Lufthansa your choice. If you wish, we will be happy to serve you fine kosher food en route. Please let us know when you make your reservation.

See your Travel Agent

Lufthansa

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and that they use both arms races and arms control as means to further those interests. The USSR has found its nuclear arsenal useless to achieve any of the purposes Mr. Weiss mentions. It does not need or use this arsenal to maintain its empire in Eastern Europe, to fight in Afghanistan, to support Syria and other Third World proxies. The Soviet nuclear arsenal serves one purpose only: it deters the nuclear arsenal of the United States. No one ever believed that either country, in entering into arms-control negotiations, would "agree to limit or reduce the very military power they require to maintain and advance their national objectives." They entered such negotiations out of a common perception that nuclear weapons do not advance those objectives. They will merely cause them to blow each other apart.

Mr. Weiss denies there is any commonality of interest even on narrower grounds involving arms-control objectives like "stability and equivalence" because "years of effort to persuade the Soviets that fixed MIRVed ICBM's are inherently destabilizing have been unavailing." Possibly this case would have been more persuasive had the U.S. not MIRVed its ICBM's already, and if the Reagan administration were not so obviously bent on developing new weapons systems that are "destabilizing" by Mr. Weiss's own definition. Nor is Mr. Weiss persuasive when he accuses the Soviets of failing to bargain in good faith because they put out a bargaining position of "equal security" which seems very close to his own. This tendentious treatment of the arms-control negotiations is bad history and bad policy. It is well to point out the difficulties in negotiating with the Soviets; but clearly Mr. Weiss's only concern is to find excuses to dismiss the entire arms-control process *per se*. . . .

DOYNE DAWSON
Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

SEYMOUR WEISS writes:

To argue, as Doyne Dawson does, that nuclear weapons are useless "as instruments of policy," and have no purpose other than to deter an opponent's use of such weapons in time of war, is to display an appalling ignorance of both international politics and military planning.

Military force is, in the first instance, designed to influence the behavior of states in time of peace. Stating simply what is in reality a highly complex matter, the West deploys its military power to defend itself and the international status quo. The Soviets deploy their military power to support highly aggressive and expansionist aims designed to alter the status quo; in Soviet terms, to gain a "favorable correlation of forces." Nuclear military forces are central to the deployment of military power on each side.

That the Soviets have achieved some measure of success from their efforts would seem not to require extensive elaboration. Suffice it to say that the U.S. nuclear commitment to its NATO allies—a commitment which has for forty years assumed that the West was and is unlikely in time of peace to mobilize adequate conventional forces to offset Soviet conventional military strength—involves being prepared to use nuclear weapons if a Soviet attack cannot be thrown back with Western conventional forces alone. While one would wish to see a more adequate conventional military build-up in Europe, and while some modest efforts are being made in that direction, the U.S. nuclear commitment remains an essential part of NATO strategy. That commitment has clearly contributed to deterring not just nuclear war, as some simplistically assert, but all war in Europe for four decades.

But the deterrent is now deteriorating. The confidence that we and our allies can have that the Soviets will be persuaded to avoid aggression out of fear of engaging the West's nuclear arsenal is surely less today than it was, for example, in the early 60's when the U.S. and its allies faced down threats from the Soviet Union over Berlin and Cuba. This deterioriation has been a factor (though obviously not the only one) contributing to a less cohesive Western alliance. Should the deterioration continue, Western interests will be badly served even if a weapon, conventional or nuclear, is never fired in anger. Is it necessary to remind Mr. Dawson and others that the Soviets have already publicly stated that they see the "Finlandization" of Europe as a desirable state of affairs? Could increased Soviet military power, including prominently nuclear military power, contribute to the belief that the Soviet Union is the dominant military entity on the Eurasian land mass, entitled to dictate the terms for a continued state of peace, and might those terms be Finlandization?

It is true, if platitudinous, to state that no one can be certain precisely what would happen if nuclear weapons were used in time of war. What we do know, however, is that each side has contingency plans to attack the military targets of the opponent should war occur, hardly a revolutionary notion. Regrettably, the Soviets seem to have taken the prospect of nuclear war more seriously than the West has. They have taken herculean measures to defend and harden militarily valuable targets which might be subject to attack, while the West has lagged behind. For example, the Soviets deploy a vast air defense involving tens of thousands of ground-to-air missiles and fighter aircraft while we have none of the former and pitifully few of the latter defending the United States. While we undertake research into future ballistic-missile defenses, the Soviets have deployed a vast civil defense capable of protecting large numbers of those who would be vital for fighting a war. At the same time, they have multiplied the numbers, explosive power, and accuracy of their various offensive nuclear forces so as to render the U.S. and its allies far more vulnerable to an attack by those forces.

It is, of course, possible that these Soviet efforts are foolishly wasteful and unlikely to have the dire effects suggested above either in time of peace or in time of war. Yet if this were so, why is there such a feverish insistence on the need for arms control?

Infanticide

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her article, "Infanticide & Its Apologists" [November 1984], Mary Tedeschi commits many of the same errors of distortion and generalization of which she accuses the press. She presents an unfair image of the medical community as a group of heartless, insensitive, depersonalized individuals who are completely detached from the suffering of their patients. I respectfully disagree with the practice of judging pediatricians and neonatologists as a group on the basis of the actions of a few.

The cases of Baby Doe and Baby Jane Doe are both poor choices for a discussion of the bioethics of how

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

much life support is appropriate, and how much intervention should be undertaken in the case of a congenitally malformed child. Down's Syndrome and spina bifida are conditions that lead to varying degrees of handicap in later life, but the prognosis for children born with these conditions is not sufficiently poor to justify withholding medical treatment. In both conditions, the child is capable of giving and receiving love. Also, future intellectual impairment is impossible to predict in infancy. Thus, there are few situations for which I could foresee advising parents to withhold treatment for a child afflicted with either Down's Syndrome or spina bifida, in the absence of severe neurological dysfunction.

The argument regarding withholding treatment that would be life-prolonging is better undertaken in the case of a child born with a condition known to lead to a vegetative existence, with little chance of either a loving exchange with his environment and caretakers, or any significant intellectual capacity (i.e., whether to repair a structural heart anomaly in a child with Trisomy 13, an affliction which can clearly be diagnosed, and fits the above criteria). In fact, though, few congenital anomalies do fit these criteria.

Baby Doe was starved to death by his parents and caregivers. In my opinion, deliberate and willful starvation is not an acceptable treatment modality for a dependent child under any circumstance. Every person has the right to shelter, warmth, and adequate nutrition.

The role of a professional is to assist families in making the best decision for the long-term interest of their child and family. A difficult dilemma arises when one asks at what point society should intervene on behalf of a child to protect him from decisions made by the family. There are no clear answers to this dilemma, although the recent introduction of bioethics committees at major medical centers offers one interesting option. Obviously, a balance must be struck between the rights of the child to treatment and the rights of families against outside interference with their privacy. Society must also be willing to assume the financial burden resulting from any such intervention against the wishes of the family. A similar conflict arises in deciding how aggressively to intervene in a case of suspected abuse or neglect.

I feel that Miss Tedeschi unfairly indicts the whole medical community with her generalizations; most pediatricians do not promote or condone infanticide, as she alleges.

CRAIG ARDEN SPIEGEL, M.D.
Resident Pediatrician
St. Louis Children's Hospital
St. Louis, Missouri

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is always worth critical notice when the Washington *Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* agree with each other, especially when they take a position in opposition to that taken by the *Village Voice*, the *Militant*, and the *National Review*. These were the journalistic battle lines on the Baby Doe issues, which also saw the Association for Retarded Citizens and the American Civil Liberties Union aligned with the Reagan administration against the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Medical Association taking an adamant stand against expensive (and presumably lucrative) medical interventions. In light of these misalliances, Mary Tedeschi's focus on the strange circumlocutions of the "liberal" press is a bland oversimplification of a complex issue. And after complaining that "the journalism on infanticide is rife with error," Miss Tedeschi adds obfuscation to error.

Miss Tedeschi states that "the killing of unwanted babies is back in fashion." The killing of unwanted babies has never been out of fashion. Today, by all available evidence, it is much less prevalent than it used to be. In studies published in *Pediatrics*, pediatricians and surgeons say that they are less likely to withhold therapy from babies with Down's Syndrome, spina bifida, or extreme prematurity than they were ten years ago. Studies of operations on infants with intestinal atresia show that many fewer infants with Down's Syndrome are denied surgery now than they were ten years ago. Surveys of intensive-care nurseries show that care is routinely given to smaller, more premature, and more severely damaged babies now than was routinely given ten years ago. The current "fashion" is for absolute, aggressive, and sometimes unfeeling respect for life as an end in itself, and the prolongation of life by any means, without regard to suffering, long-term prognosis, or the cost to the patient or society.

Miss Tedeschi's assertion that the Reagan administration was not the first to try to enforce the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is misleading. Until the Baby Doe rule was issued, the Reagan administration had been dedicated to dismantling completely the administrative apparatus for enforcing the Rehabilitation Act. When, in the Baby Jane Doe case, it invoked the Act, it did so in a way that was clearly contrary to congressional intent. The administration's repeated attempts to build a court case on its misinterpretation of this important piece of legislation finally led to a judicial chiding for "massive and unwarranted intrusion" into the privacy of the family and of the doctor-patient relationship.

Finally, Miss Tedeschi contrasts ethicists who "quibble over exactly which children should live or die" with moral philosophers like Paul Ramsey and brave physicians like C. Everett Koop. In fact, both Ramsey and Koop, along with Pope Pius XII, Nat Hentoff, representatives of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Spina Bifida Association of America, and the Association for Retarded Citizens, agree that withholding care from newborns is sometimes appropriate. Anybody who has ever worked in an intensive-care nursery knows that not every available medical technology is appropriate for every child. It becomes necessary to decide, in many individual and completely unique cases, when the intervention is truly in the child's best interest, and when it merely serves the interest of the physician or the medical institution. This involves much more than quibbling.

Miss Tedeschi carefully builds a façade of half-truths designed to support her assertion that withholding medical therapy is a more sinister form of abortion and that, as predicted by right-to-life groups, we have begun the slide down the slippery slope of moral relativity. In fact, the issues involved in withholding care and those surrounding abortion are only linked in the minds of opportunists on the Right and the Left. This is the real meaning of the fact that the journalistic response to the Baby Doe issue pitted the mainstream press against the more extremist journals of the Right and the Left.

It is unfortunate that COMMEN-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TARY chose to highlight this aspect of the Baby Doe controversy. It would have been more interesting to look at the real public-policy questions involved in deciding which babies should get what care. Neonatology is the high-growth, high-tech sector of pediatrics, and the enormous costs are paid for mostly by public funds. This is because many of the risk factors for prematurity or congenital anomalies such as low maternal age, poor maternal health, and lack of prenatal care tend to cluster in poor women with no insurance and lack of access to medical care. If the present administration were truly concerned with nondiscrimination for the handicapped and others, those demographics would be less frightening and less important than they are. As it is, the real clashes that are inevitable would have made much more interesting copy than Miss Tedeschi's tired polemics.

JOHN LANTOS
Hinton, West Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In *The Naked Public Square*, Richard Neuhaus calls the Left's tendency to doubt the integrity of its fundamentalist foes the "Elmer Gantry syndrome." In an edifying chapter on civility, Neuhaus notes the human tendency to dehumanize and demonize one's ideological opponents, this being less taxing than addressing the substance of their views. Mary Tedeschi's article illustrates that this failing does not manifest itself exclusively Left of Center. Miss Tedeschi seems as eager to have her readers believe that those who do not share her views argue in bad faith as she is to persuade them that they ought to adopt her own views.

If one were to read "Infanticide & Its Apologists" uncritically, one would believe that Miss Tedeschi's foes have two overriding motivations: (1) to find a "pretext . . . [for their] political aim of attacking the Reagan administration"; and (2) to destroy the idea that "all lives have equal worth." In both characterizations, Miss Tedeschi unfairly gives the impression that her opponents are not sincere in the views they hold. Does she mean to imply that if another position on the Baby Doe cases had provided a better "pretext" for inveighing against Mr. Reagan, then the "liberal elites," like football players chasing the loose ball, would abandon one position for another? When she claims that Peter Singer and Helga Kuhse seek "bigger game than . . . two infants," and when she repeatedly places "ethicists" in quotes, does she really mean that these thinkers are unscrupulous persons who want to eviscerate America's most cherished principle, that all men are created equal?. . . .

It would be much more helpful, albeit more difficult, if Miss Tedeschi would address the reasoning employed by Singer and others rather than simply dealing with their conclusions. Yet she seems to imply that Singer's conclusion is too absurd to merit examination. . . .

Even if Singer and others are wrong in believing that all human life is not of equal worth, how can truth be tested if our platitudes are not challenged? It is much easier not to come to terms with the complexity of this issue and of the human ambivalence involved. But unless we begin with a discussion of substance, we will never be able to trust our conclusions. We will only alienate, not understand, one another.

KIRK BERNSTEIN
Orlando, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When a medical situation is bad enough, families sometimes have miserable decisions to make about what course of medical treatment to permit. These decisions have to be made knowing it may turn out that in a few months (or many years) it would have been better to go the other way, because of an unforeseeable medical advance, or the still not predictable course of a disease. Must these decisions be made by people whom it hurts to make them? Yes. Can the consequences of these decisions be cruel either way? Yes. Do considerations of "quality of life" enter into these decisions? Yes. Does deciding to "let someone go" come close to euthanasia or infanticide? Yes.

Letting an infant starve to death is cruel. It happens because we cannot admit to the legal system (and, sometimes, to ourselves) that we have decided to have the infant killed. Here I must identify myself as a member of the other party. Apart from my suspicion of some hyperbole with respect to the facts, I have no objection to the quotation from Peter Singer beginning at the bottom of page 33 ["If we compare a severely defective human infant with a non-human animal, a dog or a pig, for example, we will often find the non-human to have superior capacities . . . for rationality, self-consciousness, communication, and anything else that might be considered morally significant. . . ."].

I find the thought of insisting that someone else raise a profoundly handicapped child distinctly more appalling than the thought of a rare infanticide. I am in favor of medical-ethics advisory boards (or whatever the fashionable term is) in hospitals, partly because they would be able to change with advances in medicine better than the legal system can. However, I hope both parties could agree that it would be better to have children brought up by people who want them than by people who don't. We ought to make it possible for obstetricians and pediatricians to locate people willing to adopt infants with particular kinds of handicaps, rather than relying on after-the-fact controversies in the news media in egregious cases. Pending examination of the fine print, I would be inclined to favor any changes in the legal system that might be needed to bring about rapid transfers of responsibility for the child in such cases, provided that such transfers would be total. Giving children up for adoption ought to be more fashionable.

VIRGIL E. VICKERS
Newton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her article, "Infanticide & Its Apologists," Mary Tedeschi commanded my attention when she characterized human crises of Baby Doe proportion as cases of "unwanted babies," "media error," and the encouragement of "pagan practices."

I suggest that parents who resist pediatric surgery for their severely handicapped infants are not "killers" and have as much right to make crucial decisions as those parents who are blessed with healthy offspring. Further, I suggest that the availability of medical techniques or any other form of scientific advance does not merit the abandonment of society's connection with natural laws.

I must also comment on how skillfully Miss Tedeschi dismisses the issue of individual rights and responsibility as she draws attention to critics of the body politic, the Surgeon General's Office, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. More pointedly, Miss Tedeschi sounds like an apologist for the polemicists of the right-to-life party who have been unyielding in their lobbying efforts against parents suffering human anguish, physical pain, and economic privation due to overwhelming birth accidents.

MARTHA S. CHERKIS
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mary Tedeschi's appeal for the rights of the newly born is sentimentally attractive, but it does not address the real issue. Serious birth defects do not pose the question of where life begins, but of where freedom ends.

It is easy to say that a newborn and a fetus have an equal right to life. The sad fact, however, is that none of us has a right to life. All we have is a right not to be killed unjustly. Both abortion and failure to provide massive lifesaving intervention may or may not amount to "killing unjustly," but the two look alike only to the victim. To the alleged perpetrator, one is an affirmative act, the other is simple freedom from involuntary servitude.

The law has long recognized the need in a free society for a right not to intervene. A doctor who refuses to perform an operation on a baby whose parents refuse to pay for it is no different from a stranger who won't pull a drowning man from a lake. The only way to save Baby Doe is to require someone to intervene. To do so, we must carve out an exception from the general rule that allows nonintervention. Such an exception exists in the obligation of a parent to support a child. But even this duty is bounded: it ends at emancipation. The law does not require an eighty-year-old parent to buy lifesaving surgery for a sixty-year-old child. Under Miss Tedeschi's reasoning, there could be no moral basis for drawing the line at adulthood. . . .

Nevertheless, the line is drawn, because life must go on. Children cannot forever be a legal charge against the biological units that bore them. What is new is the frequency with which science and technology conspire to save children whose survival means misery for their parents. The natural death of defective babies has an evolutionary value. It frees stricken parents to try again. It frees potential parents from the fear that the Department of Health and Human Services will make them the custodians of an extremely expensive and gut-wrenching vegetable. Thus, in a real sense, the interventionist's notion of the sanctity of life detracts from the miracle of conception and the moral calculus is muddied.

Our ability to save badly defective children is a new moral and legal fact. Just as a "cure" for aging would be a blessing and a curse, so, too, is the "cure" for the Baby Does of the world. The law would do well to leave the decision to intervene to the parents or relieve them of its burdens. On this score, it is noteworthy that the right-to-lifers never suggest that the government pay for their interventions, including post-operative 'round-the-clock attention and therapy. Apparently they too need not intervene, except with their mouths.

The intervention issue is intriguing because it fits a more global paradigm. Socialism is no more than the duty to intervene writ large. Likening nonintervention to abortion is like comparing wealth to robbery. My wealth could alleviate another individual's poverty. Therefore, I am causing that poverty by not surrendering my wealth to relieve it. We've heard it all before: "Property is theft." And survival is murder. So what else is new?

LAWRENCE J. KRAMER
Rydal, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In Mary Tedeschi's straightforward article on infanticide, there is nowhere to be found any cogent, philosophical analysis of the problems involved. Rather, she goes over several concrete cases chosen to shed the worst possible light on the parents making this decision, and then quotes what appear to be some horribly inept defenders of

Which of these languages would you like to speak?

Mark the one you want to speak in 2 or 3 months' time

[ ] Afrikaans	[ ] German	[ ] Malay
[ ] American English	[ ] Greek (Modern)	[ ] Norwegian
[ ] Arabic	[ ] Hebrew (Modern)	[ ] Polish
[ ] Chinese	[ ] Hindi	[ ] Portuguese
[ ] Danish	[ ] Indonesian	[ ] Russian
[ ] Dutch	[ ] Irish	[ ] Spanish
[ ] Finnish	[ ] Italian	[ ] Swedish
[ ] French	[ ] Japanese	[ ] Welsh

A Linguaphone Course makes you feel at home in almost any country. You'll never miss the meaning of conversations or be at a loss for words.

- It must work—over 4 million Linguaphone students in 88 countries speak a second language FLUENTLY
- Proven learning success. You LISTEN to real conversations on cassettes... UNDERSTAND what you hear by following illustrated textbooks. HOLD CONVERSATIONS with the speakers.
- **You start speaking the very first lesson.** You learn at your own convenience.
- It's like having a private tutor.
- You get a complete, professional language program at little cost.
- You gain a good, working vocabulary.
- In just 2 to 3 months you can speak another language with complete confidence.
- You develop an authentic accent. Only native-born speakers are used

Linguaphone The Language Masters

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE 28 DAY FREE TRIAL

Linguaphone Dept. 665 313 Nolana Ave. McAllen, Texas 78504

FREE INFORMATION: Please mail me FREE information about learning the languages I have checked. FREE brochure.

Name (please print) _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

infanticide to set up as straw men to attack. Only, Miss Tedeschi really does not attack them; she just assumes infanticide to be wrong. But assuming the point you want to prove is just a futile exercise in circular reasoning.

The issue of infanticide revolves around the *parents'* decision to destroy the infant after birth, not the decision of some outside murderer coming along and depriving both the infant and the parents of their lives and/or rights. The infants killed are highly defective, not perfectly formed sacrifices to propitiate the gods, as religions have practiced throughout history. Is this the killing of a human being nevertheless? Religion defines a human being as a magical creation mediated by a ghost in heaven, and differentiates man in this way from the animals. Science defines a human being as the animal on earth with a rational faculty, capable at least of independent consciousness and thought, if not also of independent locomotion, goal-setting, and self-sufficiency. By this latter definition, a human being does not come into existence until at least a year after birth. This is the definition used by rational men trying to build a set of just laws to govern themselves on earth.

By this definition, an infant is obviously not human—in *any* sense of the word. A man and a woman who have sex and want to have children, on the other hand, are human beings from the beginning of their act—in *every* sense of the word. And if they have a right to their lives as human beings, they must be given the chance to assume voluntarily any responsibility that they are legally required to bear.

When they take on the responsibility of creating an infant, it is with the implied belief on both their parts that the infant produced will in fact be a potential human being. Yet in most cases of infanticide we are dealing with a creature that literally cannot become human, or could in all likelihood only minimally achieve that status. It can reasonably be assumed that this was not what the parents had in mind when they started out on that nine-month course of action.

How can the principle of the voluntary assumption of legal responsibility be sustained, therefore, if the parents are forced to assume the upkeep of freaks who are unfortunately sometimes produced in the gestation process? It is a matter of simple respect for their rights to allow them the privilege of infanticide in such tragic circumstances, with the hope that their next attempt will prove more fruitful.

As for those people who say that the infant should be supported no matter what its condition: why? And would they volunteer their wealth and their lives to carry out that goal for the estimated 50,000 infants born every year into these circumstances? Of course not; the fifty phone calls reported by Miss Tedeschi to the contrary prove nothing. But such self-proclaimed enemies of "pagan practice" are quite willing to foist this life-deadening burden on others—on taxpayers, and especially on a totally innocent couple who planned to bring up a human being, not a writhing vegetable. Such people are the real murderers—murderers of the hopes and plans of grown-up human beings.

DAVID SOLAN
Norwalk, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mary Tedeschi's comments on infanticide are commendably humanitarian but painfully socialistic and one-sided. . . . Humanitarian considerations are important, and it is true that we do not dignify the human condition by denigrating the value of life. But where does justice come into this equation? Is it in the public interest to burden society with the major medical expenses and the cost of continuing care, which may extend to a normal lifespan, because two people bring into this world a malformed or unwanted human being? . . .

Parents who wish to preserve the life of a deformed child may anticipate the overwhelming expenses with a proper insurance policy. If they cannot afford to assume the unexpected burden, they may turn the responsibility over to one of the many people Miss Tedeschi says are standing in the wings waiting for an opportunity to nurture an offspring, normal or deformed. Failing that, Miss Tedeschi may want to head up an organization that accepts voluntary contributions for the support of these charitable activities. No government interference is warranted or necessary. . . .

IRWIN B. GOLDEN
Upland, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a Christian involved in the pro-life movement, I find that one of the most perplexing questions regarding both infanticide and abortion is this: how is it that within living memory of Auschwitz, Buchenwald, etc., there are so few Jews who have joined the rising tide of moral indignation against infanticide and abortion? With the exception of a few writers, like Nat Hentoff of the *Village Voice*, there has been almost no outcry from the Jewish intellectual community, much less from Jews within the media structure of the United States. How can this be? Surely it does not take too much imagination to understand that once you have introduced the idea of accepting a quality-of-life quotient to determine who should live and who should die after birth, and have justified a search-and-destroy mission via amniocentesis for the defective unborn, you have unleashed not only the spirit but the letter of the Holocaust.

I am deeply thankful for COMMENTARY's courage in printing "Infanticide & Its Apologists," and I only hope that this will start a process that will end with more American Jews looking closely at the abortion industry and the rising incidence of infanticide with a little more healthy skepticism. I hope this will happen, though I do not think it will. This is because I am beginning to understand that the American Jewish community is, I think, in the area of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia more committed to the "ethics" of late 20th-century American "liberalism" than to its own Jewish heritage, let alone religion. This is certainly also the case with American Protestant "mainline" Christianity, which has consistently been pro-abortion and is either silent about infanticide or quietly endorses it. It seems to me, therefore, that the great battle of the late 20th century in America is not going to be between Christianity and Judaism, but rather between a commitment to religious principle and morality versus a rampant secularism that will, at first, seem to promote a pluralistic society in which Jews can breathe more freely, but that will finally destroy the essence of the concept of human rights. Thus, in a few short generations, the door will be opened to the type of value-free society in which all minorities, Jews included,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will be threatened if they seem to stand in the way of the projects for human "improvement" initiated by the secular "coercive utopians." At least with old-fashioned religious bigots one could appeal to principle.

Remember that today in the Soviet Union persecution of political minorities, including Jews, often takes the form of incarceration in psychiatric hospitals and wards for "treatment." History sometimes moves down unforeseen paths, and the world of the 20th century, the century of Pol Pot, Stalin, Hitler, *et al.*, is the last place in which we should wish to legitimize death as a solution for retardation or other mental-health problems. If a child can be starved to death for six days because his IQ may be low, what can happen a few years down the road to someone whose IQ may be intact but who may be deemed mentally deficient or dangerous for "thinking the wrong thoughts"?

It is ironic and tragic that much of the Jewish intellectual community and many Jews who work in the media regard pro-life groups as backward and bigoted. Had the pro-life philosophy prevailed in Germany not too many years ago, there would have been no Holocaust.

FRANKY SCHAEFFER
Salisbury, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Milton Himmelfarb's "A Plague of Children" [COMMENTARY, April 1971] predicted Mary Tedeschi's "Infanticide & Its Apologists." . . . Ironically, West Germany's supreme constitutional court, declaring that the constitution guarantees everybody's right to life, overturned a law authorizing abortion-on-demand within the first three months of pregnancy. The high court noted that though some other countries had permitted abortion for a variety of reasons, Germany's "bitter experience" under the Nazi regime provided a historical base for the strict protection of life. . . .

JOHN F. BRITT
University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When I finished reading Mary Tedeschi's brilliant article, the following quotation came to mind: "The Holocaust teaches us this: there are no more dangerous myths than that man is perfectible and perfect peace is attainable on this earth. Delusions of earthly perfection lead to the murderous thought that life must be purged of its defects." These words were uttered by Vice President Bush at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Holocaust Memorial Museum.

At first glance we might think that the above lesson could only apply to the criminal activity of the Nazis who sought to achieve the earthly (physical) perfection of their society by eliminating undesirable racial groups, foremost among them the Jews. However, upon further reflection, one is struck by the broader relevance of this exceedingly profound statement. . . . In the United States we must recognize the tragedy of legalized abortion; . . . we must finally face the harsh reality that we are also suffering from the delusion that Mr. Bush spoke of in his comments on the Holocaust.

It takes articles like Mary Tedeschi's to point out to those who wish to listen that the enlightened liberals marching behind the pro-choice and quality-of-life banners are, often unknowingly, marching in the footsteps of the lowest savages who ever walked the earth. The claim that potential life should be sacrificed for higher considerations, all of which revolve around the question of the child's or parent's future quality of life, is a claim based on the assumption that human life has no absolute value. . . .

HOWARD WARTER
Brookline, Massachusetts

MARY TEDESCHI writes:

When Baby Doe was starved to death, when Baby Jane Doe was denied surgery, and when Andrew Stinson's death was, as his parents describe it, "orchestrated," it was impossible to establish that any of these babies would be "profoundly handicapped" (Virgil E. Vickers), "severely handicapped" (Martha S. Cherkis), a "gut-wrenching vegetable" (Lawrence J. Kramer), or a "creature that literally cannot become human" (David Solan). Nor do these epithets describe the vast

THE JERUSALEM FELLOWS

A program to develop leadership for Jewish education in the Diaspora under the auspices of the World Zionist Organization.

Sponsored by Bank Leumi Le-Israel

A three-year training program in Israel for outstanding young Jewish educators with at least three years experience in the field of Jewish education and a graduate degree or equivalent. Commitment must be made to return to the Diaspora to work in the field of Jewish education for a minimum of three years.

Applications now being accepted for September 1985 and September 1986 please write or call:

Ms. Anita Epstein
The Jerusalem Fellows
515 Park Avenue New York, NY 10022
212-752-0600

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

majority of infants mentioned in my article. I regret that my examination of these cases so taxed the attentiveness of some critics that they proceeded to commit the very errors I had already identified.

It is of course significant that none of my critics otherwise takes issue with a single fact reported in my description of these cases, nor indeed with any other pertinent empirical claim. John Lantos at least attempts as much when he asserts that doctors are in fact *more* reluctant to kill infants than they were a decade ago; but this point is quite irrelevant to my article, which focused not on aggregate killings (which are, as systematic and illegal killings tend to be, difficult to tally), but rather on the acceptance and legitimation of the *idea* of infanticide. Aside from Mr. Lantos, for whom this distinction proves too burdensome, the other writers appear to be content with my presentation of the facts; but we differ on questions of interpretation.

Craig Arden Spiegel feels that I have charged the entire medical community with promoting or condoning infanticide. He is mistaken; my analysis was confined to representatives of the medical elite. His letter does, however, bring to mind a survey conducted in 1974, in which 400 pediatricians were asked to assume that each had had a child born with Down's Syndrome and an intestinal obstruction. According to the results, which were published in *Pediatrics*, 76 percent of these pediatricians responded that they would not operate to remove the obstruction. I assure Mr. Spiegel that I had no intention of indicting the other 24 percent.

Several writers are exercised about what they deem to be my lack of civility—an objection best expressed by Kirk Bernstein, who directs me to a chapter on civil discourse in Richard Neuhaus's *The Naked Public Square*. It is indeed an edifying chapter, but like most such chapters it becomes even more edifying if one reads past the introductory remarks about Elmer Gantry to the very end, where Neuhaus explains that "the burden of this chapter is that our talk about civility will, with some justice, be looked upon as an evasion unless we go beyond questions of style to the substantive affirmation of the *civitas*."

Mr. Bernstein also speaks for others when he chides me for "seem[ing] to imply that Singer's conclusion is too absurd to merit examination." This charge is quite undeserved. I find Peter Singer's solution alarming in its popularity, obscene in its substance, and criminal in its consequences; but I do not find it absurd. Perhaps Mr. Bernstein will himself be "edified" by the labors of Mr. Solan, who helpfully supplements my treatment by concluding from premises like Singer's that "a human being does not come into existence until at least a year after birth."

Many writers are disturbed by the idea that the protection of infants requires government intervention. The objection asserts that the "right" to authorize or withhold treatment lies exclusively with the parents. Leaving aside the business of ascertaining the "right" in question (is it a property right? a natural right? a right to privacy? a right derived from the sanctity of the doctor-guardian relationship?), it is nonetheless obvious that few champions of this idea would be willing to accept its conseqences. Would the *Wall Street Journal*, which invoked this principle in defense of Baby Jane Doe's parents, decry the laws against child abuse? The question is absurd. But the inconsistency is equally absurd: it seems that we will punish the parent who starves his toddler, but only because he has procrastinated.

The practical version of this objection, which has the apparent virtue of attending to certain "realities," is even more audacious. As Mr. Golden asks, "Is it in the public interest to burden society with the major medical expenses and the cost of continuing care . . . [of] a malformed or unwanted human being?" This question, like so many others in these letters, is an excellent example of how the pro-infanticide lobby has succeeded in setting the terms of debate. I propose that we alter those terms to take account of certain other "realities," foremost among which is that, despite the sanctioned killing of Baby Doe and numerous other infants, American law does not distinguish between infanticide and homicide. The dichotomy posed by Mr. Golden and others—between killing an infant on the one hand, and paying for its care on the other—simply does not obtain, for the first of these "options" is in fact a crime.

I am aware that this answer will not satisfy some critics, and I take their dissatisfaction to be an accurate measure of how debased the public discussion of infanticide has become. No doubt it would be more politic to respond that there are waiting lists for the adoption of babies with spina bifida and Down's Syndrome (the two anomalies that account for most of the documented cases of infanticide); that neither of these disorders exacts the exorbitant costs of continuing care to which several writers allude; that the costs of medical care to the taxpayer should be weighed against the costs of investigating and prosecuting those who commit infanticide; and so on. Yet all of these facts are irrelevant to the most important question posed by such discussions.

That question, of course, is—why? Why did a practice that had been condemned for centuries as a barbarism, a practice that is even now liable to incur the severest of legal penalties, a practice that moreover appears to abrogate one of the most powerful bonds in nature—why did such a practice become the subject of debate? Not because, as some writers have suggested, the development of high technology has disturbed the process of natural selection; the fact is that the overwhelming majority of infants who become candidates for infanticide do not depend on technology for their continued survival. Moreover, as my article indicated, most such infants become candidates not because their care will be costly, but because they are suspected of mental retardation or brain damage—two defects for which technology has no cure.

The fact that several critics failed to grasp this point is highly suggestive. It is even more suggestive, however, that so many clung to the notion that in most cases of infanticide, the infant in question is (to invoke Mr. Solan's colorful phrase) a "writhing vegetable." As my article demonstrated, the most publicized cases of infanticide—like most of the cases debated among our "ethicists"—do not involve the extreme defects to which Mr. Spiegel, for example, alludes.

It is impossible to understand how such misconceptions can persist in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary without first understanding the nature of the debate over abortion. In that debate, it was the advocates of abortion-on-demand who determined the rhetorical agenda. They accomplished this by insisting that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the opposition define itself according to the hardest cases imaginable: pregnancies resulting from rape or incest. By unwittingly acquiescing in that demand, the opponents of abortion were put on the defensive and eventually subdued.

No one has learned the lesson of that debate better than the champions of infanticide. These advocates—aided by the commentators and journalists who would rather distort facts than violate the taboo against reopening the debate about abortion—have already succeeded in disseminating the impression that the infants in question do indeed have less potential than Peter Singer's dogs and pigs. But of course, just as the champions of abortion never intended to limit its availability to the victims of rape and incest, so the advocates of infanticide have many more candidates in mind than those rare infants born with defects like anencephaly or Trisomy 13. Baby Doe, for example, was killed because his parents and a judge decided that having an imperfect brain was tantamount to having none at all. Surely no moral absolutist could adduce a more grisly example of the perils of the slippery slope.

The Court & the Crèche

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his generally challenging and incisive article, "Has the Burger Court Gone Too Far?" [October 1984], Walter Berns opens his assessment of several key cases from the Court's 1983-84 term with the Pawtucket, Rhode Island crèche case. While conceding that this decision "is the least defensible" of those he evaluates, Mr. Berns places "most of the blame" for it on the American Civil Liberties Union—and then proceeds to defend the decision anyway.

Mr. Berns chides the ACLU for filing suit in the Pawtucket case since, "only a few months prior to taking review of this case," the Supreme Court had upheld a Nebraska practice of beginning each of its legislature's sessions with a prayer by a Presbyterian chaplain paid by the state. Hence, he suggests, "the ACLU ought then to have anticipated that it might lose the Pawtucket case." But the fact is that the ACLU commenced suit in the Pawtucket case in 1980, long before the Court rendered its decision in the Nebraska case. Since the ACLU had prevailed both in the U.S. District Court and in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, it was of course the City of Pawtucket, not the ACLU, which petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case.

Mr. Berns notes also that "by the time the case reached the Supreme Court," the city (bowing to the Circuit Court ruling against it) had *sold* the crèche to private parties, thus giving the Court "reason enough to declare the case moot." But he nevertheless goes on to rationalize the Court's decision of the case on the merits (which upheld the constitutionality of the display as a whole, including the crèche), observing that this "was the Court's way of saying that Christian Christmas shoppers could focus on the crèche and non-Christian shoppers on the red-nosed reindeer."

Justice William J. Brennan, speaking for the four dissenters in the Pawtucket case, said it rather differently and, from the standpoint of non-Christians, far more sensitively: "To be excluded on religious grounds by one's elected government is an insult and an injury that, until today, could not be countenanced by the Establishment Clause."

In America, fortunately, people of all faiths are completely free to express their religious convictions and pursue their religious practices without hindrance. Quite apart from the Establishment Clause, therefore, there is simply no need for government to do for its citizens anything which, in their rightful free exercise of religion, they are perfectly capable of doing for themselves. That is why the American Jewish Committee and the National Council of Churches joined in an *amicus* brief in the Supreme Court in opposition to the city-owned crèche in Pawtucket.

Has the Burger Court gone too far in matters of church and state? On the basis of the Pawtucket decision, one might not unreasonably answer "yes."

Samuel Rabinove
Legal Director
American Jewish Committee
New York City

Walter Berns writes:

Publicly sponsored religious displays are, in my judgment as well as in Samuel Rabinove's, violations of the Constitution. He and I have no quarrel here. The issue is whether we are well-advised to mount a public protest against every violation, innocuous as well as egregious. I think not, for the reasons stated at the end of my article.

The Soviet Threat (Cont'd.)

To the Editor of Commentary:

Richard Pipes has, as usual, stimulated a good deal of thought with his incisive analysis of the Soviet threat and how the West should strive to cope with it ["How to Cope With the Soviet Threat," August 1984; Letters From Readers, December 1984].

Most observers of the Soviet scene would agree with Mr. Pipes's view that the causes for the aggressive behavior of the USSR are systemic and that its elites are self-appointed and self-perpetuating. Most would also probably agree that Soviet political and economic institutions are in serious trouble but that the West cannot destabilize the Soviet Union.

When Mr. Pipes challenges the "twin assumptions that the shift from nuclear to conventional deterrence would diminish the risks of nuclear war and, at the same time, permit reductions in defense budgets," he is likely to earn mixed reviews from the specialists in that area. A shift from nuclear to conventional defense *would* require increased rather than reduced defense budgets. However, an adequate Western conventional defense could diminish the risks of nuclear war by raising the threshold between nuclear and conventional conflicts and permitting more time for reflection in a crisis. Again, the experts would probably agree with Mr. Pipes that the decision to employ nuclear weapons is not one for the West alone to make but disagree that recourse to nuclear weapons is more likely to be initiated by Moscow, unless it were persuaded of an imminent U.S. attack. Most strategic analysts would reason that Soviet leaders wish to add Western Europe to their assets rather than merely deny it to the United States. A token use of nuclear weapons for demonstration purposes cannot be ruled out, but a nuclear attack on Western Europe would tend to frustrate rather than satisfy their greedy appetite. Soviet history also suggests that its leaders are likely to be more interested in protecting what they already have than in adding to their holdings, if the cost of such additions is substantial risk.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Accordingly, any Soviet first use in Europe seems more likely to be triggered by fear than greed. One can easily agree with Mr. Pipes that it is necessary to measure the need for military strength against the military threat rather than against competing domestic needs. To agree with his rejection of the argument that "the biggest deterrent to the Russians is a healthy economy in America" does not signify agreement with the evident implication that a healthy economy is not a vital element in preserving Western military strength, especially over the long term. Putting more resources than are necessary into short-run military preparedness could well impair our capabilities five or ten years down the road, in what is a long-term struggle to maintain Western freedoms against Soviet pressures.

Mr. Pipes usefully points out the discrepancy between the way Western public opinion looks at nuclear weapons and the views held by Soviet military planners. His plea that nuclear-arms negotiations should be treated as matter-of-fact bargaining rather than as propaganda tests of "sincerity" also hits the mark. On the other hand, his impatience with the complicating role that political considerations tend to play in that bargaining seems to miss a vital point. Just as ideas have consequences, political attitudes have consequences and must be factored into our negotiating stance, however irksome this may sometimes be.

Mr. Pipes is not quite correct when he states that Moscow has not agreed to furnish data on its strategic systems but merely consented (without prejudice) to accept the data on strategic weapons for its side furnished by the United States. That was the Soviet position until late in the negotiation of the SALT II agreement, but in that document the USSR formally declared that it held specific quantities of designated weapons systems. Moreover, his judgment that the Soviet Union probably has significantly greater quantities of nuclear weapons than those known to U.S. intelligence agencies does not appear to be shared by any substantial body of informed opinion. His statement that "some American experts" question whether the observed Soviet silos are not either decoys or expendable, while the bulk of Soviet ICBM's is concealed, to be launched in wartime from soft pads, seems similarly lacking in support. If Mr. Pipes's suspicions were correct, this would suggest a much greater fear on the part of Soviet military planners that the U.S. might strike first and, therefore, imply a more "defensive" mentality than he appears ready to credit.

Mr. Pipes, in fact, consistently fails to recognize a basic fact about the current strategic balance, namely, that the total number of warheads on both sides is so high that the concealment of even a hundred more of them would have little military significance. Only if existing arsenals were appreciably reduced would "cheating" of such magnitude have a significant effect on the nuclear balance.

As Mr. Pipes points out, the arms-control process has failed to stop the growth of nuclear arsenals. Arms control may, however, have slowed that growth somewhat by inhibiting the worst-case analysis so frequently at the root of dramatic increases in warhead construction. Arms control could conceivably play that kind of limited but useful role in the future.

Just after he quotes Pascal's dictum that morality begins with clear thinking, Mr. Pipes lapses into the most questionable part of his analysis, indicating that there are between 10,000 and 20,000 objectives of political and military significance in the Soviet Union. Such a range of uncertainty as to total targets is already daunting, but Mr. Pipes compounds the problem by asserting that the United States needs to have that many accurate warheads left after absorbing a Soviet first strike. In his view, that capability alone will provide a deterrent credible to Moscow. If his proposal is serious, this would be a quantum jump from existing levels and well beyond the totals advocated by even the most avid admirers of nuclear weapons. The fact that there may be from 10,000 to 20,000 significant objectives in the USSR does not by any means indicate that all of them are valid targets for nuclear weapons.

Moreover, Mr. Pipes appears totally to ignore the potential effect on ourselves of unleashing such a torrent of nuclear destruction. One does not have to be a believer in a particular threshold for a possible nuclear winter to understand that the detonation of even a fraction of so many weapons could have a significant environmental impact on the entire northern hemisphere. And Mr. Pipes postulates that this impact from more than 10,000 warheads would follow after we had absorbed a Soviet first strike! To say the very least, this does not appear to be a credible policy and hence not likely to deter Soviet adventurism. In fact, it goes one step beyond the much-reviled mutual assured destruction (MAD) theory of deterrence through the threat of retaliation by recommending that the U.S. deliberately court suicide as a response to a Soviet nuclear attack. In addition, Mr. Pipes's assertion that the U.S. has no first-strike doctrine or capability whereas the Soviet side has both is very questionable. While the U.S. has no first-strike doctrine, Soviet military planners probably assess its capability as fully equal to their own in that regard, and growing. (Mr. Pipes apparently has not read, or does not subscribe to, the Scowcroft Commission conclusion that the USSR does not have an effective first-strike capability.)

Mr. Pipes may be correct in saying that the USSR is not in a position, either politically or economically, to engage in a war of attrition since such a war would exacerbate all its latent problems and unleash an internal crisis under the worst possible circumstances. To go beyond that judgment and postulate that the Soviet Union would have prompt recourse to nuclear weapons "if it should decide that war has become unavoidable" is, however, a considerable leap into the void. It is difficult to imagine that any prudent Soviet leader could conceive that his fate, and that of the USSR, would be improved by going nuclear unless, of course, convinced that his enemies were preparing to attack first.

Some of the *obiter dicta* with which Mr. Pipes concludes the military portion of his article are also open to varying interpretations. He is probably on good ground in advocating that the West pay greater attention to defensive measures, such as anti-ballistic-missile programs. A comparatively modest program, which might be reconciled with the existing ABM treaty, could further attenuate the threat of a successful Soviet first strike against U.S. ICBM forces.

Mr. Pipes is on less firm ground when he stipulates three "cardinal requirements" for meaningful arms-control agreements. The first of these, "on-site verification," would, no doubt, add significantly to our knowledge of Soviet nuclear capa-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bilities, and vice versa. However, it is difficult to conceive of any form of on-site inspection that would yield the kind of certainty that Mr. Pipes appears to demand. His call for agreement on a sensible unit of measurement other than launchers is equally laudable, but could prove to be illusory because of the verification difficulty encountered under the first requirement. Finally, his third requirement, calling for the adoption by the U.S. of a definition of "strategic weapons" corresponding to the Soviet concept may be a case of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. Soviet negotiators have been trying to bring the U.S. definition into line with their own for many years and have been denied satisfaction by a series of American administrations which realize that many U.S. weapons systems capable of reaching the Soviet homeland are not at present accountable under current SALT definitions.

Mr. Pipes's maxim that the chief instrument of Soviet global strategy is political attrition does not appear open to serious question. Intelligent and honest individuals can, of course, disagree on the best ways to deal with the resulting problems but his treatment of the NATO alliance is grossly oversimplified and obviously self-contradictory. On page 23, for example, he terms the alliance a monument to the short-sightedness of American diplomacy and describes NATO as an insurance policy extended by the United States to Western Europe at no expense to the insured but at an immense cost and risk to the insurer. This is clearly absurd on the face of it. One can and should argue that the other allies must bear a greater share of the common defense burden. However, more than three-quarters of the alliance's land, sea, and air forces in Europe are provided by the Europeans. Does Mr. Pipes really believe that the maintenance of armed forces on such a scale is cost-free?

Mr. Pipes, in a complete turnabout on the very same page, then points out that the average American simply is not aware that he needs Europe to defend his country. This is lamentably true, but why does Mr. Pipes spend so much effort and ink in reinforcing the existing disinformation on this subject?

He discusses at appropriate length the important role of the Federal Republic of Germany in East-West relations, noting that Germany's geographic position makes all Germans, Communist and democratic alike, particularly sensitive to any worsening of relations between the two blocs. Mr. Pipes then goes on to misinterpret his own data. He notes that public-opinion polls show that most Germans approve of NATO—78 percent desire to remain in it and 63 percent regard it as essential to their security. He also reports that when West Germans were asked whether Germany should cooperate more closely with the United States or the Soviet Union, 56 percent expressed a preference for the first option and only 1 percent for the second. He then deduces, surprisingly, that because an important bloc (32 percent) in the same poll indicated they wanted "an evenhanded" policy toward both Washington and Moscow, there exists a sizable body of "committed neutralists"—between one-third and two-fifths of the population!

There are a good many "committed neutralists" in the Federal Republic, and anti-Americanism is not uncommon there, as Mr. Pipes points out. However, it does not follow that all of the 32 percent who favor an evenhanded policy are neutralists. Some undoubtedly are, but it seems more probable, given the 78-percent pro-NATO opinion and the disproportion between those advocating closer cooperation with the U.S. and the USSR, that the majority simply believe that their interests would be served best by closer cooperation with both the U.S. and the USSR. Their view is thus more likely to be that already offered by Mr. Pipes himself, i.e., close association with the NATO allies, on condition that this not irritate or appear to menace the Soviet Union. This is not "neutralism" as the term is normally understood, but reflects merely a reluctance to volunteer for any crusades against the Soviet Union.

Mr. Pipes then refers to the fact that West Germany has recently completed a superhighway connecting Berlin with Hamburg. Its pur-

Speak Hebrew like a diplomat!®

What sort of people need to learn a foreign language as quickly and effectively as possible? *Foreign Service personnel,* that's who. Members of America's diplomatic corps are assigned to U.S. embassies abroad, where they must be able to converse fluently in every situation.

Now you can learn to speak Hebrew just as these diplomatic personnel do—with the Foreign Service Institute's Hebrew course.

This course is designed to teach you to speak and read modern Hebrew. It is not intended as a text for the study of the Bible or other Hebrew literature. The course teaches an easy, unaccented, conversational language with emphasis on spoken Hebrew, although reading and writing skills are acquired as study progresses.

The course turns your cassette player into a "teaching machine." It starts by training you in the sounds and pronunciation of Hebrew. In subsequent lessons the method of instruction incorporates guided imitation, repetition, memorization, pattern and response drills, and conversation. You set your own pace—testing yourself, correcting errors, reinforcing accurate responses. The accompanying text includes a 15 page glossary and a section on the Hebrew alphabet.

The sounds of modern Hebrew are relatively easy for Americans to learn. With the advantage of hearing a native speaking Hebrew on tape, and the ability to rewind your cassette for review, you learn the language as spoken today at your convenience and at your own speed.

☐ **Hebrew**. 24 cassettes (35 hr.), plus 552-p. text. All for $195.

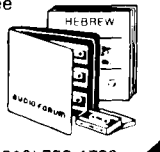
(Conn. and N.Y. residents add sales tax.)

TO ORDER BY PHONE, PLEASE CALL TOLL-FREE NUMBER: **1-800-243-1234.**

To order by mail, clip this ad and send with your name and address, and a check or money order—or charge to your credit card (VISA, MasterCard, AmEx, Diners) by enclosing card number, expiration date, and your signature.

The Foreign Service Institute's Hebrew course is unconditionally guaranteed. Try it for three weeks. If you are not convinced it's the fastest, easiest, most painless way to learn Hebrew, return it and we will refund every penny you paid. Order today!

116 courses in 39 other languages also available. Write us for free catalog. Our 12th year.



Audio-Forum
Room B-13
On-The-Green
Guilford, CT 06437
(203) 453-9794

AUDIO-FORUM®

Or visit our New York sales office: 145 E. 49th St., New York, N.Y. 10017 (212) 753-1783

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pose is to ease the economic isolation of West Berlin, but he points out with alarm that the highway could also help solve the transportation problems of Soviet armored units stationed in East Berlin in their race to the North Sea. This concern might have validity if the nearest Soviet armored units were in East Berlin, some 200 miles away. In reality, however, there are Soviet armored divisions throughout East Germany, not only in Berlin, with some units within 50 miles of Hamburg already and only a few miles from the existing West German autobahns. Another autobahn would no doubt be a convenience for the Soviet military in a conflict, but it hardly adds appreciably to the magnitude of the existing threat.

Mr. Pipes argues at some length that changes in NATO are required. Changes probably are unavoidable, as he says. However, his analysis fails to take account of the extent to which the alliance has been in the process of gradual evolution over the past thirty-five years, adapting itself to the changing situation without fundamentally altering its basic organizational structure. Many things which cannot be done by NATO itself can be done, and frequently more effectively, by nations which happen to belong to NATO. His hostile comments about NATO also seem hard to reconcile with his earlier remarks about the disaster which would occur if the Soviet Union were to succeed in establishing hegemony over Western Europe and Japan (page 22). By page 26, Mr. Pipes declares that if all that prevents Western Europe from Finlandizing itself is the presence of U.S. troops, then it becomes questionable whether it can or should be defended. Surely, the fact that American military strength is an essential element in the defense of Western Europe and Mr. Pipes's own assertion that the defense of Western Europe is vital to the survival of free institutions in the United States appear to make nonsense of the latter comments. Mr. Pipes is right to point out that the function of NATO (one of them, anyway) is to safeguard Europe from the Soviet Union, not from itself. However, if NATO fails to safeguard Europe from the Soviet Union, what is left for Europe but Finlandization?

Mr. Pipes concludes with a lengthy disquisition on East-West economic relations and ends this section by recommending that the West block technology and equipment transfer to the Soviet Union in order to impel the USSR to change (i.e., to improve) its system. "It is in the interest of the West that the USSR reform its labor polices, raising productivity by greater incentives and decentralized decision-making." This, he indicates, would represent a step toward weakening the economic and political power of the Soviet elite, and he evidently believes that a changed elite would adopt less aggressive policies toward the U.S. and the rest of the world.

While one cannot entirely rule out the possibility of such favorable events, experience leads one to question whether in fact such a result is at all likely. His theory implies wishful thinking about the extent of Western influence over the internal workings of the Soviet autocracy. Moreover, even if the West were able to nudge the Soviet leadership toward more modern concepts of labor policy, incentives, and decentralized decision-making, there are few grounds for believing that the resulting Soviet system would prove less of a threat to Western interests than it is now. Over the course of several generations, a more equitable and self-confident Soviet government might eventually conclude that its real interests would be served better by policies of cooperation instead of confrontation with the United States. This is not likely to happen overnight, however, and, in the interim, history indicates that more efficient regimes are not necessarily more peace-loving. In modern times, we can take the example of Nazi Germany, for instance. It, too, was a despotism and one of unrivaled aggressiveness. Although it had a more efficient bureaucracy than the Soviet Union, it could nevertheless have improved its economic performance through modern management techniques. Would such improvements have lessened the threat the Nazi regime posed to its neighbors?

In sum, Mr. Pipes's analysis and policy recommendations seem seriously to overestimate the leverage Western countries can have over the massive bureaucracy which is the USSR. Inertia is the principal characteristic of the Soviet system and stagnation in every field not directly connected with its military establishment is the norm. At the same time, he underestimates the degree to which Soviet society has been evolving since the death of Joseph Stalin. Change admittedly has been glacially slow and residues of High Stalinism abound. More importantly, the mechanism of repression remains and is subject to frequent exercise. Soviet government and party officials continue, as before, to bully their own citizens and, when possible, other nations. However, it is a disservice to the proper understanding of the world to suggest that the "Stalinist" Soviet state of today is identical with Stalin's regime as we came to know it forty or fifty years ago.

Willful exaggeration is a legitimate and useful pedagogical device on occasion and in political life calling a spade a bloody shovel is often the best way to focus attention on a serious problem. In this case, however, the formulation of a national policy to deal with the Soviet threat is too serious a matter to be left to such methods.

One can subscribe to Mr. Pipes's final verdict that as long as the present system prevails in the Soviet Union, war will remain an ever-present danger, which neither rearmament nor accommodation can entirely avert. The question remains, how can the United States and its allies best organize themselves to deal with this long-term danger? Mr. Pipes's prescriptions, I submit, do not advance us very far in the required direction.

EDWARD L. KILLHAM
State Department Adviser
Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island

Mr. Killham's letter represents his personal views and not necessarily those of the Department of State or the Naval War College—ED.

RICHARD PIPES writes:

Edward L. Killham holds that the Soviet Union is unlikely to initiate a nuclear strike in Europe because it would thereby destroy the very assets it covets. For all its rationality, this argument is refuted by the unceasing enhancement of Soviet nuclear forces on the tactical and theater levels. The behavior of Soviet armies in Afghanistan, where they are systematically destroying the economic infrastructure of an area which they have come to regard as their property, also confirms that Moscow invariably places political and military control above economic benefits.

"Any Soviet first use in Europe seems more likely to be triggered by fear than greed"? Fear of what?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The USSR is no more threatened today than it was in 1927 when it launched a war scare and initiated the worldwide arms race.

Of course, one should not put "more resources than are necessary into short-run military preparedness." But then "necessary" is defined differently by someone who sees the USSR as a frightened power and those, like myself, who see it as aggressive. As for "short run" versus "long run," Mr. Killham must bear in mind that since the end of World War II, the United States has found itself in the unprecedented position of being in the very front lines: it no longer enjoys the luxury of having the European allies keep the aggressor at bay while it mobilizes its industry and assembles its army. For the United States, under existing circumstances, the short run is not so distinct from the long run as it has been in the past.

Mr. Killham is right in stating that the Soviet Union ultimately furnished some data on its strategic weapons systems. In my book, *Survival Is Not Enough*, from which the COMMENTARY article was excerpted, this mistake has been corrected.

Mr. Killham questions my statement that the USSR may, and probably does, have a larger number of nuclear weapons than is known to U.S. intelligence. My argument is that the USSR must have more nuclear *missiles* than officially counted for purposes of arms-control and balance-of-power accounts, if only because it is known to have experimented with cold-launch techniques, which make no sense without the availability of spare missiles, and because SS-20 launchers are designed to fire more than one missile.

I do not see why the possibility of the Soviet Union concealing missiles indicates fear and a "defensive" mentality. It could indicate contingency planning for a protracted nuclear conflict, which could well be initiated by the Soviet Union.

I am accused of "consistently fail[ing] to recognize a basic fact . . . that the total number of warheads on both sides is so high that the concealment of even a hundred more of them would have no military significance." If this is so, why bother to conceal? And where does Mr. Killham get the figure of one hundred?

Since we already have some 9,000 strategic warheads, the notion that we should be prepared to target between 10,000 and 20,000 military and political objectives in the Soviet Union after absorbing a first strike is not as fantastic as Mr. Killham suggests. This would be particularly true if our land-based missiles were made less vulnerable by being placed on mobile launchers and/or protected by defenses. As for the "possible nuclear winter" effect of a nuclear exchange, I would feel more comforted if Mr. Killham could provide evidence that the Soviet leadership shares this scenario which has not even persuaded many scientists in this country. The purpose of my figures was to give an idea of what, in my opinion, would constitute a *credible* deterrent for a power which, ignoring the notions of "nuclear winter" and "overkill," calmly proceeds to test and deploy a fifth generation of ICBM's.

Mr. Killham must be ignorant of the vast Soviet literature on the utility of nuclear weapons if he believes that Moscow is building them out of fear of a U.S. first strike. While such a contingency must have a place in Soviet calculations, Soviet military doctrine since the late 1950's has rested on the premise that nuclear weapons are the decisive instruments of modern warfare and that, therefore, the USSR must enjoy clear superiority. For some authoritative Soviet statements to this effect, I refer Mr. Killham to Chapter 2 of *Survival Is Not Enough*.

My statement that NATO receives U.S. insurance at no cost to itself does not mean that Europe does not pay for its defenses: if this had been what I intended, this is what I would have said. My statement says that U.S. insurance to protect Western Europe, given through NATO, is costless to the recipient in that no one expects Europe to come to the assistance of the United States in any other part of the world or to defend the U.S. should it find itself in a conflict with the USSR outside Europe. Of course, Europe spends heavily on its defenses, but it would presumably have to spend more if there were no NATO. U.S. insurance is a bonus, however.

To me, neutralism means precisely an attitude of "evenhandedness" between rival or enemy parties: the *Heritage Dictionary* defines it as "occupying a middle position." Thus, German citizens who say that they would like their country to be equidistant from Moscow and Washington are, in the most proper sense of the word, neutral.

Mr. Killham's analogy between the economic condition of Nazi Germany and that of the Soviet Union completely misses the point I was making and makes a serious proposition look ridiculous. My point was not that a "more efficient bureaucracy" makes for a less aggressive foreign policy—this would be absurd—but that, *under Soviet conditions*, significant increases in economic efficiency call for reforms (decentralization of management, improved incentives, reductions in military expenditures, etc.) which have the effect of weakening the power of the ruling elite and making it less capable of aggression.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary

In the world of ideas, no other magazine comes close.

COMMENTARY 165 East 56 Street, New York, NY 10022

I want to discover Commentary's world of ideas. Please enter my twelve-month subscription for the regular price of $33.00.

☐ My check for $33.00 is enclosed. ☐ Bill me

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Terrible Question of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Norman Podhoretz

TO THINK seriously about Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn—to immerse oneself in his work, to contemplate the story of his life—is such a hard thing to do, so unpleasant, so unsettling, that no one without a special reason is likely, once having started, to persist. The difficulty begins with the sheer quantity of Solzhenitsyn's work. Even omitting books that remain untranslated, and skipping over minor works of verse and drama, the English-language reader is still confronted with about five thousand pages, most of them closely printed, and all of them written with the kind of density that demands unflagging attention: if the mind wanders for so much as a few seconds when reading Solzhenitsyn, the thread is almost certain to be lost.

To compound the difficulty, Solzhenitsyn's very subject matter is guaranteed to induce a wandering mind. If he is not describing imprisonment under conditions of hunger, sleeplessness, and cold (or heat) that one would have thought too harsh to sustain life, let alone endless hours of grueling labor, then he is writing about the horrors of the battlefield, or the terrors of patients afflicted with cancer, or the humiliations and anxieties of writers working under the eye of semiliterate censors and KGB thugs. How is it possible to keep the mind from wandering in search of relief from so relentless an assault? And how, when it has rebelled by wandering, can it be brought back? *The Gulag Archipelago* is one of the most famous books ever written, but I know from asking that very few people have managed to get all the way through the six hundred pages of the first volume and that hardly any at all have read the even longer second and the only slightly shorter third.

As for Solzhenitsyn's novels, their readership, I would guess, again from asking, has declined with each succeeding one. The first (and the shortest), *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, has been very widely read, but *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward* have proved disappointing to many enthusiasts of *Ivan Denisovich*, while *August 1914* and *Lenin in Zurich* have, I believe, been more reviewed than read. Indeed, so far had the public mind wandered from Solzhenitsyn by 1980 that *The Oak and the Calf*, perhaps his most readable book, was hardly noticed when it was published in that year.

But of course by 1980 something had happened to Solzhenitsyn which placed between him and the Western reading public another and even greater obstacle than the length, the density, and the unpleasant subject matter of his books. He had become, to use the usual euphemism, "controversial." And thereby hangs a tale.

BEFORE his expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1974, Solzhenitsyn had been seen in the United States, and in the West generally, as one of the two greatest and most heroic of the Soviet dissidents (the other being Andrei Sakharov). As such, he was also taken to be a "liberal"—which, in a certain sense and in the context of Soviet society, he undoubtedly was. On occasion he even called himself a liberal, meaning by this that he was fighting against the censorship of literature and the arts.

In those days, too, Solzhenitsyn was careful not to overstep certain limits in his challenge to the Soviet authorities. He had originally been arrested toward the end of World War II, while still in the army, when it was discovered that he had made disparaging jokes about Stalin; for this he had been sentenced to eight years in prison camps and another three in internal exile. Yet neither the fact that he was critical of Stalin, nor his bitterness over being imprisoned, at first turned Solzhenitsyn into an anti-Communist. He remained a Marxist and a Leninist in whose eyes Stalin had betrayed the revolutionary heritage of 1917. It was only in the Gulag that he gradually came to see Stalin and Stalinism not as the betrayal of Marxism and Leninism but as their logical culmination and fulfillment.

Having arrived at this realization, however, Solzhenitsyn prudently kept it to himself, even after Stalin's death and Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign. By posing as a Leninist who, like so many millions of other loyal Communists, had suffered unjustly for his premature opposition to

NORMAN PODHORETZ has just completed his twenty-fifth year as the editor of COMMENTARY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the "cult of personality," Solzhenitsyn not only could aspire to rehabilitation as a Soviet citizen but could even hope that he might get away with a book that told the truth about Stalin's prison camps.

The strategy worked. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was submitted to the leading Soviet literary journal, *Novy Mir,* itself edited by just such a "liberal" Communist as Solzhenitsyn pretended to be, Aleksandr Tvardovsky (who was also Russia's most highly regarded living poet). Thanks to Tvardovsky's maneuverings, publication of *Ivan Denisovich* was eventually authorized by Nikita Khrushchev himself; and in November 1962, literally overnight, an unknown forty-four-year-old ex-convict employed as an elementary-school teacher of math and physics in a small provincial town became one of the most celebrated writers on earth.

Nevertheless, after *Ivan Denisovich* and a couple of shorter pieces, *Novy Mir* rejected one manuscript after another by Solzhenitsyn—not because Tvardovsky disliked them but because, things having tightened up again, he feared that these manuscripts would be stopped by the censors and that the position of his magazine would thereby be jeopardized. Yet the false dawn of liberalization under Khrushchev had left a trace: these were the years when manuscripts, often copied in a feverish rush, were beginning to circulate through the clandestine network known as *samizdat* and were also being smuggled out of the Soviet Union and finding publishers in the West. It was via such channels that Solzhenitsyn's books came to light, simultaneously endangering him with the Soviet authorities and protecting him from their wrath. Taking shrewd advantage of this situation, Solzhenitsyn carried on a running battle with the Writers' Union, demanding that it stand up against the censorship of literature by insensitive party functionaries and appealing for support in getting his own novels published in the Soviet Union.

All this time, Solzhenitsyn was thought in the West (in the words of the appendix to the first British edition of *Cancer Ward* in 1968) to be "a loyal and patriotic Soviet citizen [whose] protests were directed against the bureaucracy's excesses and abuses, not against Soviet authority and the Communist society [and whose] aim was to improve and perfect the Soviet system, not to destroy it." And when, in 1970, Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, he was still the darling (to quote the appendix to *Cancer Ward* again) of "the liberal intellectuals of the West—. . . the same people who had for years hoped for the liberalization of the Soviet state and worked hard for the reduction of East-West tensions."

About three years later, the KGB unearthed a hidden copy of *The Gulag Archipelago,* and Solzhenitsyn was finally arrested. But instead of being returned to prison as he had expected, he was stripped of his Soviet citizenship and deported to Germany. Now that he was in the West and beyond the reach of the KGB, Solzhenitsyn had no reason to continue posing as a good Communist fighting for his rights under Soviet law; dissembling would in any event have been impossible after the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago,* in which the origins of Stalin's terror are traced right back to Lenin himself and in which terror in general is seen as the essence of the Bolshevik Revolution. And in case his liberal admirers in the West should somehow fail to grasp the point, Solzhenitsyn proceeded to hammer it home in a series of speeches, interviews, and essays that left no room for doubt or ambiguity.

Evidently Solzhenitsyn's enemies in the Soviet Union had been right in calling him anti-Soviet and his apologists in the West had been wrong; and if it was treason for a Soviet citizen to be an anti-Communist, then Solzhenitsyn was indeed a traitor.

BY ITSELF being guilty of treason would not necessarily have damaged Solzhenitsyn's reputation in the eyes of the liberal intellectuals of the West. For one thing, many of them—as witness their attitude toward Alger Hiss, the Rosenbergs, Kim Philby, and Burgess-Maclean—saw nothing overwhelmingly reprehensible in treason. For another, the climate of opinion in the 1970's was very favorably disposed toward any individual defiance of authority in any country for any reason; dissent was the order of the day, never mind its content or direction. Angela Davis here, Solzhenitsyn there: it was all the same.

But Solzhenitsyn *here* turned out to be another story. For not only was he an anti-Communist, he was anti-liberal; and not only was he anti-Soviet, he was anti-détente; and not only was he both anti-liberal and anti-détente, but he insisted on bringing the two antipathies together into a scathing denunciation of the West for its failure of nerve in the face of an ineluctable Communist threat. Here was a species of treason that the liberal intellectuals of the West were not quite so ready to forgive. "At one time," writes Michael Scammell in his new biography of Solzhenitsyn,* "one almost never heard a word against him; he was lionized and idolized"; but now "he is more often denounced as embittered or ignored as irrelevant."

Scammell disclaims any intention "to redress the balance," but the response to his book suggests that he has at least inaugurated a process of reconsideration. Not, to be sure, in all quarters. Thus the late Carl R. Proffer, a specialist in Soviet literature, in a review published in the *New Republic* just after his death, described Solzhenitsyn from beyond the grave as "an old man with the limited education of a convinced Soviet Leninist and the limited life of a totalitarian prisoner," an "amateur" whose work is marked by silliness and

Solzhenitsyn: A Biography, Norton, 1,051 pp., $29.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stupidity. It is all "claptrap," and yet "for two decades right-wing Russians and others tremblingly call him a prophet." More surprisingly, on the other hand, in such other liberal periodicals as the *Atlantic* (Bernard Levin), the *New York Review* (Aileen Kelly), and the New York *Times* (John Gross), Scammell's book has called forth pieces in defense of Solzhenitsyn, none written by "right-wing Russians" and all leaning heavily on the word "prophet."

About Scammell's *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography*, there is bad news and good news. The bad news is that it adds yet another thousand pages to the more than five thousand by Solzhenitsyn himself that must be read by anyone wishing to think seriously about him. The good news is that it is a wonderful book, and not the least wondrous of its qualities is that despite its daunting length it makes a serious encounter with Solzhenitsyn easier rather than harder to undertake.

There is a great deal of autobiographical material in Solzhenitsyn's own books, especially the *Gulag* volumes and *The Oak and the Calf*, but it is so disconnected and fragmentary that putting it all together into a coherent account as one goes along is almost impossible. Thus even if Scammell had done nothing but this, his book would have performed a major service to anyone trying to think seriously about Solzhenitsyn.

But Scammell does much more than merely organize Solzhenitsyn's scattered revelations about his own life into an intelligible story; he also checks these occasionally tendentious and self-serving revelations wherever possible against other sources. Further, in addition to subjecting Solzhenitsyn's version of events to critical scrutiny, Scammell is critical of Solzhenitsyn's political ideas from his own unobtrusively expressed social-democratic point of view. Yet the last thing he wishes to do is "expose" or debunk Solzhenitsyn. This is a book written out of the deepest respect for its subject, and it can be said of Scammell that as a biographer he does what Matthew Arnold enjoined the critic to attempt to do in dealing with a literary work: "To see the object as in itself it really is."

Finally, Scammell is himself so good a writer that his book is a pleasure to read. His prose is lucid and elegant; his scholarship is scrupulous, well-digested, and lightly carried; and his narrative pace is steady and sure.

BUT if Scammell truly fulfills Matthew Arnold's injunction in dealing with Solzhenitsyn the man, he does not in my opinion do so well with Solzhenitsyn the writer, whom he seems to regard as a major artist in the line of the great 19th-century Russian novelists, in some respects resembling Tolstoy and in others Dostoevsky.

This view is very widely shared and is—or at least used to be—the foundation of Solzhenitsyn's enormous prestige. It was as a novelist that he burst upon the Soviet scene, it was as a novelist that he won the Nobel Prize, and it was as a novelist that the world held him in so high an esteem. It was also primarily as a novelist that Solzhenitsyn saw (and sees) himself. Indeed, one of the paradoxically surprising facts about Solzhenitsyn that emerges from Scammell's book is that he was always a literary man—surprising because when *Ivan Denisovich* was published in the West the impression was conveyed that its author was a scientist who had tried his hand at a novel as the best way to tell the world about Stalin's labor camps.

In fact, however, Solzhenitsyn had entertained literary ambitions all his life. "As a young child," says Scammell, "he had decided that he wanted to become one of three things: a general, a priest, or a writer." At the age of nine he was already writing stories, poems, and plays; at the age of thirteen he kept a journal called *The Literary Gazette*; and at the age of fifteen he wrote a novel. Even before reaching eighteen, he had resolved to write "a big novel about the Revolution" modeled on Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and he even drafted a plan for it. All this time he was also immersing himself in the classics of Russian literature, reading and rereading the works of Pushkin, Gogol, Gorky, and especially Tolstoy. Nevertheless he decided to study physics and mathematics at the university rather than literature partly because it would be easier to make a living as a teacher of science.

Then, only days after his graduation, war broke out and Solzhenitsyn joined the army, becoming in due course an artillery officer. So much the writer was he by now that not even combat could stop him. While complaining in letters home that the continuous fighting at the front was keeping him from his "main work," he managed between battles to write several stories, and when he sent a batch of them off to two Soviet writers he admired, he announced to one of his friends that "I'll tear my heart out of my breast, I'll stamp out fifteen years of my life," if they should say that he had no talent.

If war could not stop Solzhenitsyn from writing, neither could imprisonment. In the Gulag, even on those rare occasions when pen and paper were available, to write was literally to risk one's life or at the very least to court more severe conditions and longer sentences. Yet even under those circumstances Solzhenitsyn went on writing, in his head if not on paper, and in verse rather than prose because verse was easier to memorize. In eight years he committed *tens of thousands* of lines to memory, and it was only after his release that he was able to transcribe them and even then only in secret.

A writer, then, from the very beginning and a literary man through and through. The ambitions of this writer, this literary man, moreover, knew virtually no bounds. Not only did he make grandiose plans like the one for a multivolume epic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about the Bolshevik Revolution that would be nothing less than a successor to *War and Peace*; he also dreamed of rescuing and reviving the great traditions of Russian literature which were in danger of being forgotten and lost as a result of censorship and the state-imposed corruptions of "Socialist Realism."

It is a measure of Solzhenitsyn's almost incomprehensible single-mindedness that he should actually have stuck with the first of these ambitions, formed when he was only seventeen years old. The original scheme involved a Communist hero, and by the time he started work on the first volume (published here in 1972 as *August 1914*), he had undergone the revolution in his own political perspective that reversed his attitude both toward the Revolution (from positive to negative) and toward the Russia of the Czars (from negative to positive). Yet so little did this radical change in point of view affect the overall design that, according to Scammell, "he was able to incorporate some of the scenes written in Rostov nearly thirty years beforehand virtually without altering them."

Since *August 1914* has now been followed by several more volumes, of which only the excerpts concerning Lenin have thus far been translated into English (under the title *Lenin in Zurich*), with more yet to come, it is perhaps unfair to attempt a critical judgment. Nevertheless it can already be said with confidence that if *August 1914* is a fair sample, *R-17* (as Solzhenitsyn calls this entire work-in-progress) has nothing in common with *War and Peace* except the superficial characteristics of length and theme.

War and Peace is about Russia during the Napoleonic wars and *August 1914* is about Russia during World War I; both move back and forth from the battlefield to the home front; and both contain fictional characters and historical personages. There, however, the resemblances end. *War and Peace*, one of the greatest of all novels, is alive in every detail, and *August 1914* is, to put it plainly, dead from beginning to end. Neither the fictional nor the historical personages are truly realized, and though the combat scenes are scrupulously rendered, they remain staged set-pieces with no power to arouse the emotions or draw the reader in. As for the narrative line, it is driven by the grim energy of the author's will and not by the inner compulsion through which the living organism of a genuine work of novelistic art always unfolds itself.

In short, judging by *August 1914*, Solzhenitsyn's epic of the Revolution fails utterly in its claim to stand beside *War and Peace*. Beyond this, it bespeaks the collapse of the hope that Solzhenitsyn would rescue and revive the great stifled tradition of the 19th-century Russian novel.

It was this hope of a rebirth of Russian literature that was aroused in Tvardovsky and his colleagues on the editorial staff of *Novy Mir* when they read the manuscript of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, with its audaciously realistic exploration of life in a forced-labor camp. "They say that Russian literature's been killed," Tvardovsky exclaimed in the course of a drunken celebration over the anonymous manuscript that had been submitted to them. "Damn and blast it! It's in this folder. . . ." And when, finally, *Ivan Denisovich* was published, millions of Russians responded in much the same way. Scammell explains:

> It is hard for Westerners to grasp just how bleak and barren the Soviet literary scene is and was (especially in the early 60's), how parched and starving Soviet readers are for contemporary literature of any quality. . . . Paradoxically, . . . although *Ivan Denisovich* was published in Moscow for avowedly political reasons and was received both there and abroad mainly as a political sensation, it was one of the few Soviet prose works since the war that could stand completely as a work of art and be discussed exclusively in terms of its aesthetic achievement, quite apart from its political qualities. It was a universal statement about the human condition, and it was for this reason that comparisons were made with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and that hungry readers cherished the book.

Yet as Solzhenitsyn himself has often pointed out, and approvingly, Russian readers differ from Westerners in making little or no distinction between the aesthetic and the moral or spiritual dimensions of literature. Accordingly, it was not as "a universal statement about the human condition" that *Ivan Denisovich* was read and revered in the Soviet Union, but as a truthful rendering of a particular experience undergone by the Russian people.

This was naturally the case with former prisoners—*zeks*, to use the Russian term—who poured out their thanks to Solzhenitsyn in hundreds and even thousands of letters. Here are some examples: "My face was smothered in tears. . . . I didn't wipe them away or feel ashamed, because all this . . . was mine, intimately mine, mine for every day of the fifteen years I spent in the camps." Or again: "Although I wept as I read it, at last I felt myself to be an equal citizen with the rest. . . ." And again: "Thank you for your tremendous achievement, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I would give you anything, anything. Reading your story I remembered . . . the frosts and the blizzards, the insults and humiliations. . . . I wept as I read—they were all familiar characters. . . ."

Nor was it only former *zeks* who were grateful to Solzhenitsyn for *Ivan Denisovich*. "I kiss your golden hands," wrote one reader; "Thank you for your truthfulness," wrote another; "Thank you for your love and courage," said a third; and speaking for them all, one correspondent declared: "Thank goodness that you exist . . . look after yourself. Your existence is our happiness."

With the help of Scammell's brilliant account

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the context, and by the exercise of a little imagination, a non-Russian can understand reactions such as these, even if he finds it impossible to share in them. For while *Ivan Denisovich* is certainly a better novel than *August 1914*, it never really rises to "a universal statement about the human condition," and no more than *August 1914* can it bear comparison with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

Yet Tvardovsky, going even farther than mere comparison, pronounced *Ivan Denisovich* superior to Dostoevsky's *House of the Dead* because "there we see the people through the eyes of an intellectual, whereas here the intellectuals are seen through the eyes of the people." On this issue, however, even many admirers of *Ivan Denisovich* disagreed, asking why Solzhenitsyn had chosen to write from the point of view of a simple peasant instead of through the consciousness of an intellectual. Solzhenitsyn hotly defended himself against this criticism:

> Of course, it would have been simpler and easier to write about an intellectual (doubtless thinking of oneself all the while: "What a fine fellow I am and how I suffered"). But . . . having been flung together with [Ivan Denisovich] Shukhov in the same sort of conditions, . . . a complete nobody as far as the others were concerned and indistinguishable from the rest of them, . . . I had a chance to feel exactly the same as they.

Scammell, agreeing with Tvardovsky and Solzhenitsyn against the critics, adds that "By making his hero a common peasant, Solzhenitsyn was able to seize the essence of the labor-camp experience and universalize it. An intellectual hero would have been less typical and more particular, diluting the story's power and impact."

Surely, however, the impact of the story is weakened, not strengthened, by being told through a character whose life on the outside has been as full of hardship and deprivation as Ivan Denisovich Shukhov's and who has therefore become so accustomed to the kind of conditions he is forced to endure in the labor camp that he can end a day of unrelieved horror in a state of happiness over all the luck he has had in not suffering even more ("They hadn't put him in the cooler. The gang hadn't been chased out to work in the Socialist Community Development. . . . They hadn't found that piece of steel in the frisk," etc.). Solzhenitsyn intended this conclusion as a celebration of the resiliency of the human spirit, and so it is. But at the same time it makes identifying with Ivan Denisovich Shukhov (or entering into his skin, to use Solzhenitsyn's image) almost insuperably difficult.

No such problem of identification is presented by *The First Circle*, which is set in the least harsh "island" of the Gulag, a prison (known as a *sharashka*) housing scientists whose forced labor takes the form of research on various projects useful to the state. Here, therefore, all the main characters are intellectuals and they spend a good deal of time arguing about philosophy, politics, and the history of their country.

In moving from the "inferno," as it were, of *Ivan Denisovich* to the *sharashka*, "the first circle" of this prison-camp Hell, Solzhenitsyn was trying both to broaden and deepen his fictional exploration of the Gulag. *The First Circle* is thus very much longer than *Ivan Denisovich* and includes a much wider representation of Soviet society, ranging from Stalin himself through various levels of the party hierarchy and down to the depths of the prison system and its inhabitants. In *Ivan Denisovich*, we see Shukhov taking pride in the physical labor he is forced to do, and in *The First Circle* the prisoner-scientists are similarly fired up over a project that, if successfully completed, will enable the KGB to keep even closer surveillance over the population. The difference (tending to vindicate the critical view of *Ivan Denisovich*) is that for some of the characters in *The First Circle* this poses the kind of acute moral dilemma that lies far beyond the range of Shukhov's consciousness.

But if it is easier to identify with the characters in *The First Circle* than with Ivan Denisovich Shukhov, it is harder to sustain an interest in them over the course of this very long novel. As in *August 1914*—and as in *Cancer Ward*, another long and thickly populated novel set in a hospital for patients suffering from cancer—Solzhenitsyn doggedly does all the things a novelist is supposed to do. He constructs plots, he catalogues details of scene and character, he transcribes conversations, he sets up dramatic conflicts, he moves toward resolutions. Yet all to no avail. Edmund Wilson once said of F. Scott Fitzgerald that despite everything that was wrong with his novels they never failed to live. The opposite can be said of Solzhenitsyn's novels: despite everything that is right about them, they always fail to live.

In maintaining, however, that Solzhenitsyn is not a true novelist, let alone another Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, I am far from suggesting that he is not a great writer. On the contrary, in my opinion his two major nonfiction works, *The Gulag Archipelago* and *The Oak and the Calf*, are among the very greatest books of the age. Everything that he tries, and fails, to do in his novels is magnificently accomplished in these works. While the novels never come to life, there is so much vitality in the three volumes of *The Gulag Archipelago* that it threatens to overwhelm, and undermine, the horrors of the material. For never can such stories have been told with such verve, such gusto, such animation, such high-spirited irony and sarcasm as Solzhenitsyn brings to this history of the Soviet prison system.

But to call *The Gulag Archipelago* a history is a little like describing the Talmud as a legal encyclopedia. The reason the Talmud is so hard to describe to anyone unacquainted with it is that there is nothing else quite like it to which it can

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be usefully compared. The same thing is true of *The Gulag Archipelago*.

In the absence of archives or histories or other published sources, Solzhenitsyn's research at first consisted of collecting reports and stories from former *zeks*—227 of them, to be exact—through secret meetings and carefully concealed correspondence; only later did he have access to such published materials as existed in restricted library collections. Drawing on all these sources, and on his own experience as well, Solzhenitsyn managed, through concrete episodes, biographical and autobiographical detail, historical analysis, and an almost infinite variety of literary modes and devices, to reconstruct the entire history of the Soviet prison-camp system and to convey the experience of the many millions (as many as 100 million all told, he estimates) who lived and died on the "islands" of the "archipelago." Writing this book, especially under conditions of enforced secrecy, was a stupendous feat of mind, spirit, creative originality, and stamina. It will stand forever as one of the majestic achievements in the history of literature.

Solzhenitsyn himself valued *The Gulag Archipelago* highly enough to resolve that, if his children were kidnapped and held hostage by the KGB as a way of preventing him from authorizing its publication in the West, he would sacrifice them rather than permit the book to be suppressed. But to *The Oak and the Calf* (where we learn about this "superhuman decision" to choose *The Gulag Archipelago* over his own children) he ascribed very little importance indeed. He called it "*secondary* literature: literature *on* literature, literature apropos of literature, literature begotten by literature," and he apologized in a preface for wasting the reader's time with such inferior stuff: "So much has been written, and people have less and less time for reading: should we, in all conscience, be writing memoirs, and literary memoirs at that?"

The irony is that *The Oak and the Calf* is not only far superior to any of Solzhenitsyn's "works of primary literature" (by which he means his novels), but even exceeds them in the very qualities that are usually thought of as novelistic. For example, there is not a single character in Solzhenitsyn's novels as vividly and fully realized as the character of Aleksandr Tvardovsky in *The Oak and the Calf*. Nor do any of the novels carry the dramatic force—the drive, the pace, the suspense—of *The Oak and the Calf*. Somehow, in telling the story of his own literary career, Solzhenitsyn was able to make far better use of his novelistic skills than he ever could in the writing of actual novels. The result is a great work of autobiography, and one of the most revealing books ever written about life, and particularly cultural life, in the Soviet Union.

Solzhenitsyn is not the only writer in our time who has largely been valued both by himself and the world as a novelist but whose best work has been done in forms other than prose fiction. Norman Mailer and James Baldwin spring to mind immediately as American examples of this phenomenon. It goes without saying that Solzhenitsyn towers over writers like these, but he has in common with them a quasi-religious attitude toward art in the traditional sense: to be a writer means to compose novels, poems, or plays. These are what make up—in Solzhenitsyn's own terms—"primary literature"; everything else is "secondary." But whereas Mailer and Baldwin are merely writers who mistake the nature of their own true talents (encouraged in this by a culture that accords higher status to fiction than to nonfiction), Solzhenitsyn presents a more complicated problem. And it is in trying to grapple with that problem that we immediately run up against the much-vexed issue of Solzhenitsyn the prophet.

THERE can be no doubt that Solzhenitsyn has come in retrospect to regard himself as an instrument of the will of God. As is clear from many hints and suggestions in *The Oak and the Calf*, he believes that, unbeknownst to himself, he was appointed to rescue from oblivion "the millions done to death" in the Gulag. It was for this purpose that he was sent to the Gulag himself; it was for this purpose that he survived the ordeal; and it was also for this purpose that his life was spared once more after he developed a cancerous tumor that had been diagnosed as hopelessly fatal. Not only did God mark him out and then spare him for this mission; God also (though, again, he was unaware of it at the time—there were no visions or voices from on high) guided his steps in his struggles with the Soviet authorities, enabling him, a lone individual, to defy the awesome power of a totalitarian state and live to tell the tale.

It is not necessary to accept Solzhenitsyn's interpretation of his own life, or even to share his belief in God, in order to understand how and why he should have come to see himself as an instrument of the divine will. Indeed, one measure of the greatness of *The Oak and the Calf* is that it makes this conviction of Solzhenitsyn's seem at the very least plausible and even a rationally irresistible conclusion from the clear evidence of his life. In any case, whether or not one believes in God, and whether or not one believes that Solzhenitsyn is an instrument of the divine will, *his* belief has produced those "clear effects" to which William James pointed as the "pragmatic" test of a genuine religious experience.

The first, and the grossest, of those effects is to have kept Solzhenitsyn alive when he might so easily have succumbed to the hardships of his years in the labor camps and then to his struggle with cancer. He himself takes the view that "People can live through hardship, but from hard feelings they perish," and that "Cancer is the fate of all who give themselves up to moods of bilious,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

corrosive resentment and depression." What saved Solzhenitsyn from such mortally dangerous "hard feelings" was his conviction that the millions done to death in the Gulag depended on him to rescue them from yet a second and in some ways an even more terrible death—the death of oblivion. If he weakened, if he faltered, if he himself were to die, they would all sink unremembered, unrecorded, into a silent pit.

Thus, reproaching himself for "the mistaken sense of obligation" that led him to follow Tvardovsky's advice that he hold back for a while after publication of *Ivan Denisovich*, Solzhenitsyn writes:

> Let me make myself clear. I did, of course, owe something to Tvardovsky, but the debt was purely personal. I had, however, no right to look at things from a personal point of view and to worry about what *Novy Mir* would think of me. My point of departure should always have been that I did not belong to myself alone, that my literary destiny was not just my own, but that of the millions who had not lived to scrawl or gasp or croak the truth about their lot as jail birds. . . . I, who had returned from the world that never gives up its dead, had no right to swear loyalty either to *Novy Mir* or to Tvardovsky. . . .

After the KGB had found and confiscated a hidden archive of his manuscripts, he reproached himself even more bitterly:

> Just one slip of the foot, one careless move, and my whole plan, my whole life's work, had come to grief. And it was not only my life's work but the dying wishes of the millions whose last whisper, last moan, had been cut short on some hut floor in some prison camp. I had not carried out their behests, I had betrayed them, had shown myself unworthy of them. It had been given to me, almost alone, to crawl to safety; the hopes once held in all those skulls buried now in common graves in the camps had been set on me—and I had collapsed, and their hopes had slipped from my hands.

In these and similar passages, we see the apparently contradictory combination of megalomania and selflessness that come so miraculously together in the making of a true prophet. *Everything* depends on him alone, and yet he himself is nothing: truly nothing, a mere vessel. In the case of Solzhenitsyn, it is only keeping faith with the dead that keeps him alive, and more than alive: capable of feats of endurance, exertion, courage that do indeed seem "superhuman." This is a word he himself, as we have seen, uses in describing his decision to sacrifice his own children, if need be, rather than suppress *The Gulag Archipelago*. But I for one do not hesitate to apply it to the entire story of his life: to his survival, to his capacity for work, and to his defiance of the Soviet authorities. Nor, to repeat, is it necessary to see the hand of God in all this in order to recognize it as in some sense superhuman.

But even if one did see the hand of God in Solzhenitsyn's life, I do not think one would see it in his novels. Reading *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina* one is hard put not to regard Tolstoy as superhuman; the young Maxim Gorky, for example, atheist though he was, could not help feeling that Tolstoy was more than a mere human being. But as a novelist, Solzhenitsyn is, one might say, all too human. In the making of novels, he is driven by ordinary and quite conventional literary ambitions. He wants to be a great artist and to write books worthy of the masters of Russian literature. The subject matter of those books is more or less the same as the subject matter of his nonfiction works, but the point, the overriding point, of the novels is to use it for the purposes of the author's artistic dreams and aspirations. In the novels, he is serving himself, he belongs to himself alone, his literary destiny is just his own. How do I know this? I know it from the simple fact that his novels are dead on the page, denied the breath of life that the novelist is only given the power to give when he is able to transcend himself and enter into the experience, the "skin," of others.

The opposite is true of Solzhenitsyn's nonfiction works. Again the contrast with Tolstoy is instructive. Tolstoy, as we know from Henri Troyat's great biography of him (a biography, incidentally, from which Tolstoy emerges looking like a character out of Dostoevsky), was certainly a megalomaniac, whether writing fiction or religious tracts. But it was only as a novelist that he became capable of selflessness as well; the theoretically impossible marriage of these two opposing qualities in the writing of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* is what makes them seem superhuman. The Tolstoy who later wrote tracts and pamphlets was as little capable of selflessness as most human beings, even though it was this Tolstoy whom the world, with its usual perspicacity, took for a saint and a prophet.

With Solzhenitsyn the position is reversed. It is in *The Gulag Archipelago* and *The Oak and the Calf* that Solzhenitsyn's megalomania merges with selflessness. Here he *is* serving something more than the "purely personal." Here he does *not* belong to himself alone. Here his own "literary destiny" *is* beside the point. Here he *does* become a vessel through which "the millions who had not lived to scrawl or gasp or croak the truth about their lot" find voices and tongues and are at last able to tell what they know. And therefore, it is here, where he is true to his prophetic vocation, and here alone, that he also becomes a great writer.

As such he succeeds in accomplishing what he only imagines he is doing in and through his novels. To the Russian people he is returning their stolen or "amputated" national memory, reopening the forcibly blocked channels of communication between the generations, between the past and the present; and to other peoples in other parts of the world he is offering "the condensed experience"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of his own country "accurately and concisely and with that perception and pain they would feel if they had experienced it themselves." To what end? Why, quite simply, to help them all avoid making the same mistake themselves: the mistake of submitting to Communism.

Here, then, we arrive at the very heart of Solzhenitsyn's prophetic mission: to preach against

> the failure to understand the radical hostility of Communism to mankind as a whole—the failure to realize that Communism is irredeemable, that there exist no "better" variants of Communism; that it is incapable of growing "kinder," that it cannot survive as an ideology without using terror, and that, consequently, to coexist with Communism on the same planet is impossible. Either it will spread, cancer-like, to destroy mankind, or else mankind will have to rid itself of Communism (and even then face lengthy treatment for secondary tumors).

It is by preaching so radically anti-Communist a point of view—and in terms allowing for no hope of negotiation or compromise and seeming to threaten another world war—that Solzhenitsyn has made himself more and more unpopular in the West. I am well aware that Solzhenitsyn's Western critics also include a number of staunch anti-Communists who oppose him not because he is a "cold warrior" but because he espouses a species of Russian nationalism that is explicitly anti-democratic and (so they claim) implicitly anti-Semitic. Indeed, one such critic has charged that the latest volume of *R-17*, which has not yet been translated into English, goes beyond implicit into open anti-Semitism in its recounting of the assassination of Stolypin, Czar Nicholas II's prime minister, by a terrorist of Jewish origin.

Others to whom I have spoken disagree, and not having read the book in question, I cannot make a first-hand judgment. But my own impression, based on an acquaintance with virtually everything by Solzhenitsyn that has been translated into English, and confirmed by Scammell's characteristically scrupulous examination of the question, is that the charge of anti-Semitism rests almost entirely on negative evidence. That is, while there is no clear sign of positive hostility toward Jews in Solzhenitsyn's books, neither is there much sympathy. I can well imagine that in his heart he holds it against the Jews that so many of the old Bolsheviks, the makers of the Revolution that brought the curse of Communism to Russia, were of Jewish origin; and in general he also seems to ignore the mordant truth behind the old quip (playing on the fact that Trotsky's real name was Bronstein) that "the Trotskys make the revolutions, the Bronsteins pay the bill." Still, whatever there may be in his heart, there is no overt anti-Semitism in any of his translated works.

On the other hand, his speeches and pamphlets are full of overt attacks on the democratic West, whose loss of "civic courage" and whose capitulation to the "Spirit of Munich" ("concessions and smiles to counterpose to the sudden renewed assault of bare-fanged barbarism") he blames on secularism, materialism, and liberalism. It is this, rather than any intimations of anti-Semitism, on which Solzhenitsyn's liberal critics have fastened in trying to write him off. And even to some of us who agree with him about Communism and about the "Spirit of Munich," Solzhenitsyn's brand of Russian nationalism with its authoritarian coloration and its anti-Semitic potential presents the most unpleasant and the most unsettling facet of a serious encounter with his life and his work.

In my opinion, however, we who agree with Solzhenitsyn about Communism would be making the worst of mistakes if we allowed ourselves to join with his critics in dismissing him as a crank or if we ourselves were to ignore him as an embarrassment. His challenge to the Russian people is to liberate themselves from Communism by means of their own spiritual resources and without the help of the West, but no matter how we feel about the form of society he urges upon them in the post-Communist Russia for which he prays, *our* main business is with his challenge to *us*.

For here—it cannot be repeated too often—is a lone individual who, by having successfully stood up to the full power of the Soviet state, has made himself into a living reproach to the West: a parable in action of the very courage in the face of Communist totalitarianism that the West has been unable or unwilling to summon in its own dealings with the Soviet state. Solzhenitsyn's terrible and terrifying question to us is this: is it possible that courage like his own is all that we require to escape from the fate he has come to warn us against? Is it possible that the courage first to see the truth about Communism and then the correlative courage to act upon it can guide our steps to safety as his own courage guided Solzhenitsyn's, that it can make the Soviet leaders back down and ultimately, perhaps, even collapse, just as they did when confronted by Solzhenitsyn himself?

Forcing us to face that terrible question, rubbing our noses in it, has been Solzhenitsyn's prophetic mission to the West. To seize upon the anti-democratic Slavophilia of his message to the Russian people as an excuse for continuing to evade the challenge of his life and his work would only confirm the worst of his charges against us—the charge that we are cowards. And it would bring us ever closer to the day when we too might find ourselves plunged headlong into that pit out of which Solzhenitsyn once clawed his way so that the dead might be remembered and the living might be saved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Politics, the Jews & the '84 Election

Lucy S. Dawidowicz

POLITICS has been an avocation of the Jews for a mere two hundred years, and as Mark Twain once noted, despite their splendid capacities in other fields, they have not excelled at it. Twain wrote, of course, before the development of political Zionism, but so far as the American Jewish community was concerned, the 1984 political season offered little that might have persuaded him to change his mind.

MODERN Jewish politics was forged in the crucible of 19th-century Europe, in the striving for liberty and political equality that swept the European continent from West to East. Heinrich Heine described the great task of his time as "the emancipation of the whole world—in particular of Europe." In that struggle for emancipation, for the right to share in the privileges and obligations of citizenship, the particularist Jewish agenda fit perfectly into the universalist political agenda as Heine defined it.

The Jews found that, with few exceptions, those who would deny them political rights represented the old order—the aristocracy, the military, the nationalists, the political Right, and above all the Church. This was, on the whole, a true perception. Alexis de Tocqueville had noted that in France just before the Revolution, he "had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom marching in opposite directions." Therefore, in pursuing the politics of emancipation in Western and Central Europe, Jews joined the liberals and the liberal parties. Liberals advocated the rights of man, the liberty of the individual, freedom of conscience and of worship. Liberals upheld a political order which offered the Jews rights as citizens, security as a religious and communal group, and economic opportunity as individuals.

Thus, what has come to be known as the Jewish liberal "tradition" was shaped originally by the politics of emancipation in Western and Central Europe. One classic anecdote will suffice as illustration. In the Hapsburg empire, Jews won the right to vote and hold office during the revolution of 1848. One of the five Jews elected to the revolutionary Austrian parliament was Rabbi Dov Berish Meisels. He took his seat on the Left, joining the Radicals. When the speaker of parliament asked for an explanation of this apparently anomalous political gesture on the part of a clergyman, Rabbi Meisels, playing on the words for "right" and "rights," said: "Jews are rightless"—*"Juden haben keine Rechte."*

In Eastern Europe, liberal politics blossomed in the czarist empire in the 1860's and 1870's under Alexander II, to be all but extinguished after 1881 when Alexander was assassinated by terrorist revolutionaries. Thereafter, reaction and repression became the hallmarks of czarist rule, and eventually the liberals, the constitutionalists, and the centrists were crushed between the millstones of Right and Left; politics in the czarist empire became radicalized. Many Jews, understandably, found themselves attracted to the politics of the Left, the politics of revolution.

The revolutionary Left promised a social order from which evil, injustice, and inequality would be eliminated—in short, a utopia. The terms and tactics of this politics were secular, yet the commitment which the revolutionary movement demanded of its followers was the equal of that demanded by any religious movement. This attitude of political messianism characterized especially the Jewish radicals, who had abandoned their old religious traditions and were in need of new ones. But after the Bolshevik Revolution, after the political purges and murderous excesses of the Stalinist period, the messianic fever cooled, including among Jews outside the Soviet Union who had once lent it their support. Besides, Jewish nationalist politics—Zionism—now absorbed messianic energies aplenty, and rewarded them more fully and more concretely.

The European Jews who migrated to the United States brought with them their Old World political traditions. In the mid-19th century, those who came from Central Europe, where they had fought alongside the liberals for emancipation and equality, were attracted to the then newly formed Republican party. This was the party of Abraham Lincoln, the party which opposed the extension

LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ, a veteran contributor to COMMENTARY, is professor emeritus at Yeshiva University and the author of *The Golden Tradition, The War Against the Jews 1933-1945, A Holocaust Reader, The Holocaust and the Historians,* and *On Equal Terms: Jews in America 1881-1981.* This article is based on the fifth annual State of World Jewry Address which Mrs. Dawidowicz delivered in December 1984 at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA in New York.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of slavery into the new territories, which condemned attempts to reopen the African slave trade, and which favored a liberal immigration policy.

Those who came later, in the mass migration from Eastern Europe, followed other political paths. The Orthodox among them practiced the politics of *shtadlones*, of intercession with those in power—at that time, the Republicans. The radicals enlisted in the Socialist party, which had its brief heyday just before World War I, or in the Communist party, whose time came in the 1930's. But most Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, with their fervor for liberty, equality, and justice, turned to the Democratic party. In the big-city slums, the local Democratic club became the mediator between the green immigrants and the outside world, the defender of the poor and the advocate of the working people.

It was Alfred E. Smith, New York's governor, the party's presidential candidate in 1928, who first solidified the Jewish attachment to the Democratic party, but it was Franklin Delano Roosevelt who turned the Jews into Democratic fanatics. A Jewish Republican judge once described the fierce devotion of the Jews to Roosevelt with a pun on the Yiddish world *velt*, world. The Jews, he said, have three worlds: *Yidn hobn drei velten—di velt* [this world], *yene velt* [the world to come], *un Roose-velt*.

UNDER Roosevelt, the Democratic party emerged as the national party of the big-city poor and the unemployed, the new immigrants, the Catholics, the Jews, the blacks who had come North to look for work, the exploited workers of the sweatshops and the mines, the infant labor unions struggling against the unbridled power of corporate capitalism. Within a decade, all these groups forged a coalition that would keep the Democrats in power for a long time. As for the Jews, they saw the Democratic party as embodying both the political agenda of the emancipation and the social agenda of secular messianism. And they also saw it as a bulwark against anti-Semitism. In those days, in the United States as in Europe, anti-Semitism was part and parcel of right-wing politics. Father Charles Coughlin, the rabble-rousing radio priest who used his Catholic pulpit to vilify the Jews, seemed to many a living confirmation of the Church's role in fomenting hatred. Coughlin's attacks on President Roosevelt and the New Deal further convinced Jews that liberal politics was the best means of insuring their security and serving their interests.

Actually, public-opinion polls of the 30's showed that anti-Semitic attitudes pervaded American society as a whole. Those attitudes would persist until World War II came to an end in 1945. Only then, when the Allied armies came upon the terrible camps with the dead piled high and the living barely alive, when the horrors were there for all the world to see, did anti-Semitism start to decline, and not just in America but in the West at large. For the next twenty-two years anti-Semitism in the Western world was little more than a ghostly presence, the six million murdered European Jews a ghastly reminder of its consequences.

But only in the Western world. Beyond the West, anti-Semitism continued to thrive, requiring a new kind of political response. Among Arabs the time-dishonored propaganda of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* circulated in new guises and disguises, one weapon among many in their ongoing war to destroy the Jewish state. In the Soviet Union, a country with a venerable history of anti-Semitism, Stalin and his successors turned the anti-Semitic gospel into a tool of domestic policy. Leonid Brezhnev, who succeeded Khrushchev in 1964, went Stalin one farther by making anti-Semitism an adjunct of Soviet foreign policy, and turning it, now labeled anti-Zionism, into another of the Soviet Union's exports of lethal commodities. The scale of this anti-Semitic enterprise in the last two decades would have stirred envy in Adolf Hitler.

In 1965 a hint of what Jews would be faced with in the coming years emerged at the United Nations. A resolution had been introduced in a committee of the General Assembly which specifically condemned anti-Semitism. The Soviet delegate, believing that his country was the intended target of the resolution, substituted another in its place. The Soviet version moved to condemn "anti-Semitism, Zionism, Nazism, and all other forms . . . of colonialism, national and race hatred, and exclusiveness." That motion never came to a vote—nor did the United Nations ever adopt a resolution against anti-Semitism—but it opened the door for the UN's ugly condemnation, ten years later, of "zionism," with a lower-case "z" as an added insult, as "a form of racism and racial discrimination." One did not have to wait for Orwell's 1984 to see Doublethink and Newspeak triumph in the precincts of the United Nations.

IT WAS 1967 that proved the watershed year in contemporary Jewish history, marking the advent of a new set of political circumstances. This was of course the year of the Six-Day War, when Israel's life hung in the balance and when Jews everywhere became fearful of a new Holocaust. The miracle of Israel's victory gave rise in turn to a universal feeling among Jews of religious redemption. It seemed that the Divine Presence was once again manifest in Jewish history, and that the God Who had abandoned His people during World War II had at last returned to them. And if God had returned to the Jews, so the Jews began to return to Him and to their people—perhaps most dramatically of all in the Soviet Union, where Israel's miraculous victory invigorated dissident Jews and gave them renewed conviction for their struggle.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was, however, also a dark response to Israel's swift victory. The Soviet Union intensified its anti-Semitic campaign abroad, its vast propaganda machine depicting the Jewish state as an aggressor nation, the tool and accomplice of the "imperialist West," the "outpost of U.S. colonialism in the Middle East," the "lackey of capitalist America." And in the West as well, 1967 conjured up the seemingly banished ghost of anti-Semitism.

This was no resurrection of the old anti-Semitism of the fascists, reactionaries, and Christian Right. The new anti-Semitism emanated from the Left, from those whose political forebears a century ago had been the staunchest allies of the Jews in their struggle for emancipation. It infected the New Left, which split apart over the issue of Israel. Perhaps most shockingly, it infected a number of black intellectuals, professionals, and political leaders. And inevitably it made inroads into the Democratic party, then beginning its own process of internal disintegration and collapse. (In 1968, though the Democrats did finally succeed in nominating Hubert Humphrey as their presidential candidate, the party of the New Deal, as it had been constituted since 1928, came asunder. The South defected; labor began to defect; and the party's political machine ceased to operate.)

This was not the first time that Jews, including especially Jews on the Left, had been betrayed by the Left. It had happened in czarist Russia in the 1880's. It had happened in 1939 when the Soviet Union signed a pact with Nazi Germany. For Jews who still retained an element of Jewish pride, these successive betrayals were traumatic. So, in 1967, as in earlier times, some Jews abandoned the Left for good, while others retreated into wounded privacy. Still others, of course, stayed.

Today, the worldwide anti-Semitism of the Left has become if anything more open and unmistakable. In the late 60's, at least, when anti-Semitic attitudes were still in bad repute in the West, sophistical distinctions were maintained between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. By 1982, during the war in Lebanon, few bothered with such distinctions any longer. And by the 1984 Democratic primary campaign it all came spilling out into mainstream politics.

Precisely because of the direction from which the new anti-Semitism flows, it is important to underscore the fact that the anti-Semitism with which Jews were familiar in the past is at a low ebb in this country (and elsewhere in the West). A recent Gallup poll showed that only 2 percent of Americans held unfavorable opinions about Jews. Overt anti-Semitism of the Right, too, has decreased. The Anti-Defamation League, which tracks incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism and violence and monitors the activities of anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi organizations, has found that of the 800 anti-Semitic incidents which were reported for the whole of the United States in 1982, none was perpetrated by organized hate groups. The ADL estimates current KKK membership at about 6,500 and the number of neo-Nazis at some 500. Although one organization specializes in denying that six million European Jews were ever murdered during World War II, that is an offense against historical truth which, however obscene, does not threaten Jewish security as did, for instance, Henry Ford's promotion of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in the 1920's.

The anti-Semitism of the Christian churches has similarly dwindled to a shadow of its past. Fascist governments used to invoke Christian anti-Semitism to reinforce their ideology, while the churches' anti-Semitic preachments sustained in turn the policies of the reactionary and fascist states. But fascism passed away in the wreckage of Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy; it died with Rumania's Iron Guard and Hungary's Arrow Cross. As for the anti-Judaism of the Christian churches, it never recovered from the encounter with Auschwitz. One by one, the Protestant denominations came to address the question of Christian responsibility for the murder of the European Jews. The Second Vatican Council of the 1960's, whatever its shortcomings, set the Catholic Church on a new course in its relations with Jews. Christian writings and textbooks have been revised to eliminate the "teaching of contempt." Christians are now instructed to recognize the bonds between Judaism and Christianity and to respect Judaism not just as the forebear of Christianity, but in its own right.

This Christian education was accomplished, it is true, at a terrible cost. But now that most churches acknowledge anti-Semitism as a sin against God and man, even if they needed encouragement to do so, they no longer dispense it. Even at Oberammergau, where the Passion Play acts out the ancient charge of deicide, the program now contains a disclaimer that the production does not intend to blame the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus. Just this year, the Lutheran World Federation, marking Martin Luther's five hundredth birthday, adopted a declaration repudiating "the sins of Luther's anti-Jewish remarks" and confessing "with deep regret" that Luther's teachings had been used to justify anti-Semitism and Nazism.

None of this is intended to deny the presence of lingering anti-Semitic attitudes on the Right (or in the churches), only to stress that they seem, today, trivial when compared to the steady drumbeats emanating from the Soviet Union, the worldwide Left—including, incidentally, the Left-leaning Christian denominations—and the United Nations. The question is, how have Jews responded, politically, to this changed circumstance? And the answer is, not well.

MANY American Jews, among them some leading rabbis and other official spokesmen, seem curiously reluctant to concede the decline of anti-Semitism in old places, or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

refuse to admit the rise of anti-Semitism in new places. Convinced that old-style Christian anti-Semitism is an inevitable feature of our society, they have located its current home in the heart of Protestant evangelical territory. Right after the election of 1980, for example, the head of a major Jewish organization claimed that the most serious growth of anti-Semitism in America since the outbreak of World War II has accompanied the rise of right-wing fundamentalism. That unfounded charge was repudiated by other Jewish agencies, but in 1984, once again, a battery of similar accusations was leveled against the evangelicals in the midst of the presidential campaign.

There is no need to question the sincerity of Jews who say they fear the threat posed by the evangelicals, but there *is* a need to ask whether that fear is founded on anything real. Evangelicals differ from other Protestants in their belief that they are commanded to spread the good news about Jesus and the centrality of Scripture. The first thing to know about them, however, is that they are not monolithic. Some are fundamentalists, that is, theologically conservative. But, according to a Gallup poll, more than half of all evangelicals consider themselves to be "Left of Center" or "middle of the road." They ought not, then, to be stereotyped.

Since the early decades of this century, evangelicals have regarded the Jews and the Zionist movement with sympathy. In our time, their friendship and political support for Israel have been genuine and substantial. Rationalist liberals ridicule this support because they think it is premised entirely on Christian millennial expectations. But evangelical support for Israel is derived from the Bible, from God's promise to Abraham to bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse it. And even if the evangelicals did support Israel only for ulterior and religious ends, better such support now than the hostility which distinguishes their politicized brethren in the National Council of Churches.

The evangelicals number nearly fifty million Americans. Given such figures, it is to be expected that there are anti-Semites among them; how could it be otherwise? Yet just three years ago, *Christianity Today*, the largest and most influential of evangelical journals, published a lengthy editorial calling for "repentance, restitution, and action which will ferret out, expose, and actively oppose incipient and overt anti-Semitism." The editor also declared, "to attack Jews is to attack evangelicals and such attacks will be resisted by evangelicals as attacks against themselves."

Nor does the religious exclusiveness of the evangelicals in itself necessarily spell anti-Semitism. In 1984 many Jews recalled publicly the remark made four years earlier by the Reverend Bailey Smith, then president of the Southern Baptist Convention. He said that "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew." Smith denied the remark was anti-Semitic, and I for one believe him. After all, Jews have their own fundamentalists, who also practice religious exclusiveness, and some of whom say that God Almighty does not hear the shofar when it is blown on the High Holidays in a Conservative synagogue. (Fundamentalists of all persuasions are privy to knowledge of God's hearing ability not vouchsafed to the rest of us.)

As for the Reverend Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, it represents the response of anti-modernist Christians to the cultural dislocation of our time. Every time America experiences a cycle of extreme social tension, in which the legitimacy of traditional moral values is questioned, Protestant America attempts to restore those moral and religious values which derive from the Bible, or, to use Jerry Falwell's favored phrase, from "the Judeo-Christian heritage." Such movements have recurred with predictable regularity in American history since the Puritans first arrived on these shores. The Moral Majority is such a movement. It speaks for religious Christians in their battle against secularization and the debasement of moral values in contemporary life; it does not speak against Jews.

Nor does it pose a serious threat to the separation of church and state. To be sure, Christian revivalists, especially when they feel beleaguered, have always tried to use the law to impose their religious views on a recalcitrant society. The archives of Congress and of state legislatures bulge with such failed bills. Over 140 bills on Sunday observance alone were proposed in Congress between 1888 and 1945. In the twenty-one years since the Supreme Court outlawed Bible reading and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in the public schools, some 200 bills to overturn those decisions have been introduced in Congress. But the wall of separation between church and state still stands, and stands firm.

Separation of church and state, however, does not entail the elimination of religion from society. Nor does it entail the utter privatization of religion; that was the goal of the French Revolution, not of the American. What agitates many Jews about the Moral Majority, though they might be reluctant to own up to it, is that it confronts them with the need to acknowledge that the goal of the French Revolution is also their goal. From the dawn of modernity, secular emancipated Jews have yearned not only for political equality but even more for a society in which all men would be joined in a mythic brotherhood transcending the barriers of religious difference. Since that maximum program is beyond realization, universalist Jews have been willing to settle for a minimum program, that is, for a society in which religion is thoroughly privatized. The infusion of a religious element into political discussion threatens this dream of universalist Jews; that is why they oppose the Moral Majority's advocacy of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christian values even when those values coincide with Jewish ones.

THIS brings us to the Jewish vote in the election of 1984. Some 35 percent of the Jewish electorate voted for Ronald Reagan—about the same proportion that voted for him in 1980. That statistic does not qualify as epoch-making: the majority of Jews still remained loyal to the Democratic party. But it was not so long ago that only 10 percent of Jews, 20 at most, voted for a Republican presidential candidate; even 35 percent indicates a trend.*

But if, as I believe, a political realignment is beginning to take place among American Jews, the process is occurring at a markedly slower pace than among the electorate at large. In this election, indeed, the Jewish vote was almost exactly the reverse of the national trend. That is, while almost 60 percent of Americans voted for President Reagan, more than 60 percent of Jews voted for Walter Mondale. The lopsided Jewish voting pattern resembled that of the blacks, the unemployed, and persons in households earning under $10,000 a year, even though Jews in no way resemble those groups or share their social and political interests.

Why? The answer, it seems to me, has to do with the powerful residual hold of the universalist mind-set, a hold so encompassing that it has led to an alienation of the Jews *as a political group* from their rightful place in the American consensus. At times this alienation is even acknowledged explicitly. During the 1980 election, for example, one Jewish intellectual expressed his attitude toward the United States with singular frankness: "No country on earth has been better to the Jews than the United States; but it is not our country." What I am suggesting is that this attitude of alienation may be more widespread than is generally thought; if so, it is a danger to the political health of the Jewish community.

One wonders, at any rate, whether an attitude of alienation, born out of and justified by the politics of universalism, may not have had something to do with the failure of the Jewish community to address the range of its concerns in this election. To be sure, Jewish organizations lobbied to have the correct views on Israel inserted in the platforms of both parties, but for the most part those in Jewish institutional life seem to have been so obsessed with the Moral Majority and the marginal issue of prayer in school or after school as to have neglected to attend properly to the Jewish interest, even in connection with Israel.

A case in point concerns UNESCO, the UN's cultural organization, which has in recent years become a forum not only for anti-American but even more for anti-Israel activities. But when the U.S. government solicited testimony from nongovernmental agencies at a hearing on our possible withdrawal from UNESCO—surely an outcome devoutly to be wished by Jews—only one Jewish organization recognized that American interests and Jewish interests coincided in this regard, and responded positively.

WHAT should have been on the Jewish political agenda in 1984? The indispensable requirement for Jewish security anywhere, happily taken for granted in the United States, is that Jews live under a government that will protect their liberties, insure their safety, and deal justly with them. In this respect, American Jews, being the largest, most secure, and most affluent Jewish community in the world, have obligations to less fortunate Jewish communities, be they in Chile, in Nicaragua, in Ethiopia, or in the Soviet Union. In voting, and just as importantly in their approach to the two major parties, Jews have an obligation, as Jews, to consider how these particular interests of theirs can best be advanced.

The Jewish agenda requires a strong government in the United States to insure Israel's security. Jews who care about Israel are obliged to use their vote to that end. They did so four years ago, when for the first time in over fifty years the Democratic candidate for the Presidency, Jimmy Carter, failed to win a majority of the Jewish vote. In 1984, by contrast, a great many Jews seemed willing to ignore the drift of the Democratic party into isolationism and defeatism, not to mention the party's embrace of Jesse Jackson, a man overtly hostile to a strong America and a strong Israel.

On the domestic agenda, one issue Jews needed to address in 1984 was black anti-Semitism. And this was, indeed, much talked about during Jesse Jackson's primary campaign and during the Democratic convention, after which it became a nonsubject. It should not have been allowed to, since its existence is undeniable and has been documented in every public-opinion poll taken in the last twenty years. These polls have charted the decline of anti-Semitic attitudes among whites, on the one hand, and the consistent rise, on the other hand, of anti-Semitic attitudes among blacks, especially younger and better-educated blacks. Did Jews exercise any pressure, moral or financial, on the Democratic party on account of the scandal of Jesse Jackson's anti-Semitism? Did they punish the party at the polls for sheltering it, and for pointedly declining to adopt a resolution condemning anti-Semitism in the party platform?

No doubt most Jews who voted Democratic believed they were voting for the age-old liberal agenda, for the extension of rights to those still

* It should be noted that this figure has been challenged on the basis of surveys that show as much as a 40-percent Jewish vote for Reagan. But we will have to wait for the results of the more careful studies now being made.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deprived of them. But the current agenda of those who call themselves liberals is less a matter of rights and more a matter of social and economic redistribution. The Democratic program to achieve that end is quotas, a policy which (since the word is still apparently taboo) now goes under the name of "affirmative-action goals, timetables, and other verifiable measurements." And what the Democrats would impose on the country they also mean to impose on their party. A resolution setting up a Fairness Commission to plan the next Democratic convention provided that members of the commission were to be chosen according to gender, race, and sexual preference: "equally divided between men and women, and . . . fair and equitable participation of blacks, Hispanics, native Americans, Asian/Pacifics, women, and persons of all sexual preferences [*sic*!] consistent with their proportional representation in the party." Under that system of "fairness," Jews would never have a chance.

Quotas threaten America with the fate of the Hapsburg empire. There, the demands of diverse groups competed with the common interest, and the clamor of large groups drowned out the murmur of small ones; the system could not survive. Whether the democratic United States could survive institutional quotas we do not know, but it is certain that, politically, Jews could not.

This, at least, most Jews understand, and so have opposed quotas. Yet in continuing to give so much ungrudging support to the party that now stands for quotas, are they not, in the name of a misguided and ossified univeralism, failing once again to address their political agenda with the requisite degree of responsibility?

Jews cannot live by universalism alone. Can they, then, live by particularism? Whereas religiously liberal Jews voted disproportionately Democratic in the November 1984 election, Orthodox Jews tended to vote Republican. But many of these Orthodox—not all—suffer from their own brand of alienation. To protect themselves from the seductions of secular society, they persist in trying to erect high walls around their communities, to separate themselves, if not necessarily from other Jews then certainly from the Gentile world. While many Jewish universalists are in thrall to a 19th-century political tradition, many Jewish particularists are still committed to a view of Jewish life in 19th-century Eastern Europe.

The pitfalls of this can be illustrated with a story. In 1812 the hasidic rabbis in the czarist empire believed that the war between Napoleon and Czar Alexander I was the war of Gog and Magog, which presaged the coming of the messiah. Menahem Mendel the Seer of Lublin, the Maggid of Mezeritch, and Menahem Mendel of Rymanow all prayed for Napoleon to triumph over the Czar. They believed that by his victory the Jews would be delivered from their sufferings and persecutions. But Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Lyady, the founder of the Lubavitch dynasty, prayed for the Czar to defeat Napoleon. He explained his position in a letter to one of his followers: "If France should win, riches will increase among Jews and they will prosper. But they will become estranged from God. If Alexander wins the war, the Jews will become impoverished, but their hearts will be joined with God."

The Lubavitcher *rebbe* was correct in his prediction of what would happen to European Jews in the next hundred years. For in those days, when Jews were given political freedom they prospered, and they assimilated. As for those Jews who remained restricted to a life of poverty and persecution in the Pale of Settlement, they also remained true to their religious traditions (though changes were in the making there too that the rabbi did not foresee).

There was no way, however, that Schneur Zalman could have predicted what would happen to Judaism in a free society. We are now in the midst of an extraordinary religious renewal among Jews that is a response to the murder of the six million European Jews and a rebuke to those today who continue to wish the Jews dead. By means of this revival Jews have demonstrated their confidence in themselves and in their ability to remain true to their traditions, even in the modern world. But America for its part has also demonstrated that Judaism can flourish in an open and pluralist society. Does this not justify a greater confidence, on the part of religious Jews, in America?

If Jews need to know their own interests as well as the interests of others, they also need to know the art of politics as well as the books of the Torah. They need, in short, to live in this world, not in the world of the politically utopian or the religiously messianic. Among other things, this means staking out an independent position and resisting an automatic commitment either to the Democrats or to the Republicans. Many Jews might be surprised to learn that—Mark Twain to the contrary notwithstanding—practicing the art of politics in this sense is a task to which their traditions, and their history, have admirably suited them, and can yet serve them well.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Can the Bishops Help the Poor?

Peter L. Berger

On November 11, 1984, a committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, headed by Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee, issued the first draft of a "Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy."* Publication of the document had been carefully timed for after the elections, to avoid the impression of political partisanship. Given the contents of the draft, one can appreciate both the civic prudence of the bishops and the annoyance of some Democratic-party politicians who, it was reported, regarded it as less than helpful to have been assaulted repeatedly during the campaign by Catholic bishops opposing abortion while this document, which would have given support to important portions of the Mondale/Ferraro platform, was held back until after the Reagan landslide.

But the muses of symmetry were not asleep. For on election day itself another document was issued, on the same topic, by a self-constituted Lay Commission on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy, headed by William E. Simon and Michael Novak. Titled *Toward the Future: Catholic Social Thought and the U.S. Economy*,† it is, fairly enough, a document the *Republicans* would have loved to have had at hand during the campaign.

The parallel character of the two documents is not accidental. The lay commission, knowing what its bishops had been up to, was engaging in a bit of preemptive damage control. Yet while the two documents came out at the same time, and deal with the same subject matter, in one important respect they are not comparable at all. The Simon/Novak report is the result of an unofficial lay initiative; it has no actual or potential standing in terms of official Church teaching. The pastoral letter of the Weakland committee, on the other hand, was commissioned three years ago by the assembled Catholic bishops of the United States. It is now to be discussed and revised, with a final version to be voted on by all the bishops in November 1985. At that point, the document will constitute official Catholic teaching—not, to be sure, on the level of an infallible pronouncement on faith and morality, but as an expression of the magisterial authority of the American episcopate, and as such to be taken very seriously by all Catholics.

This difference between the two documents is very significant. Because of it, and despite the fact that the Simon/Novak report is far superior both in its level of economic understanding and in the quality of its moral judgment, I will discuss the bishops' pastoral letter here in much greater detail. For what the Catholic bishops of the United States have to say is of greater import than a statement, no matter how sensible, of a group of Catholic laymen.

The bishops, however, say they have spoken out not merely to give moral guidance to Catholics but also to join their voice to the public debate. Addressing all Americans, they explicitly mention and invite comment from non-Catholic Christians and Jews, with whom they share a common biblical heritage. The remarks that follow, then, are a response by a non-Catholic Christian to this invitation.

The bishops' draft letter is organized into two major sections. The first deals with the theological and ethical presuppositions of their approach to economic life. The second draws specific applications to policy, with particular attention to the areas of employment, poverty, food and agriculture (not yet in the present draft but to be added later), overall policies of economic collaboration, and relations between the United States and the world economy.

Few readers, Christian or Jewish, are likely to quarrel with the bishops' basic presupposition, namely, that "the dignity of the human person, realized in community with others," should be the fundamental moral criterion of economic life. Indeed, the Simon/Novak report, using almost identical language and citing the same authorities, also calls the dignity of the human person "the first principle of Catholic social thought."

As the bishops develop this proposition, how-

Peter L. Berger is University Professor at Boston University. His books include *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, *The Heretical Imperative*, and (with Brigitte Berger) *The War Over the Family*. He is currently at work on a book on the social and political theory of capitalism.

* Available from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

† Available from the Lay Commission, P.O. Box 364, North Tarrytown, N.Y. 10591.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ever, one is struck by the emphasis they place on what they themselves call the "communitarian" character of the Christian vision of economic life. To be human, they write, is to hear "the call to community"; they tell us that "the goods of this earth are common property"; they cite Clement of Alexandria on the "communality of possessions"; they refer to "communal solidarity" and the "fullness of community." And they counterpose all this stress on communitarianism to something they deplore, the "selfish appropriation and exploitation" of the goods and resources of the world.

Now, the bishops are careful to say that they are not against private property as such, and one may surmise that they are also not necessarily against capitalism—though, very curiously, they avoid using the word throughout the document. Yet from the beginning a suggestion has been planted that there is something basically wrong with *our* economic arrangements—since, obviously, they are not communitarian. In making this suggestion, to be sure, the bishops stand in a long Catholic tradition of suspicion toward capitalism and all its works (a tradition, incidentally, that long antedates modern socialism). It is a tradition, as we shall see, that is openly challenged by the Simon/Novak document, which in this respect, at least, is a far more radical statement than the bishops'.

Aside from their emphasis on communitarianism, the bishops also tell us, reasonably enough, that the Christian approach to economic life must be informed by the "primacy of justice" and by an awareness of the "dangers of wealth." Then they go on to embrace the so-called "preferential option for the poor." This awkward phrase, proclaimed as Church teaching at the 1979 meeting of the Latin American episcopate in Puebla, Mexico, encapsulates one of the leading ideas of liberation theology. It means, quite simply, that the criterion for judging the moral worth of a society is the fate of that society's poor. It also means (in the words of the bishops) that the Church has a "prophetic mandate to speak for those who have no one to speak for them." Deriving from this "option for the poor" are "basic economic rights" which every society ought to guarantee to all its members.

Shorn of its Guevarist undertones the "preferential option for the poor" is an idea unlikely to shock many Jews or Christians. After all, it was Dr. Johnson, not exactly a theologian of liberation, who insisted that "a decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization." But the rest of the bishops' argument here is shaky. A common assumption of democracy is that no one has a "mandate" (prophetic or otherwise) to speak for people who have not elected him as their spokesman; the Catholic bishops of the United States have not been elected by any constituency of poor people. More importantly, even if there is something that could be called economic rights, just who or what is the society that is supposed to insure them? The bishops repeatedly disclaim a statist approach to economic life, yet when they come to specifics it is mainly state action that they recommend.

This, indeed, is one of the major substantive flaws of the pastoral letter. When the bishops refer to the fact that most American Catholics were once poor, they do so in order to criticize them for the temptation, in their new-found affluence, to be indifferent to the fate of today's poor. It does not occur to the bishops to ask how so many poor Catholic immigrants managed to achieve affluence within one or two generations in America. But if they had inquired into this tale of rags-to-riches, they would have discovered that it had very little to do with state actions or government policies; what it had a lot to do with was capitalism.

In view of the spirit animating the bishops' document, it is not surprising that, in dealing with the putative shortcomings of the American economy, they should zero in on inequalities of wealth and income. The bishops are careful to say that the ideal of distributive justice cannot be reduced to a simple arithmetical formula and that a certain degree of inequality can "sometimes" be justified. However, present levels of inequality, both in this country and among the nations of the world, they deem "morally unacceptable." (They make special mention of inequalities based on race and sex.)

Measures of income and wealth distribution are of course enormously complicated, but is it so clear that American society, as the bishops claim, exhibits a degree of inequality high enough to be labeled "morally unacceptable"? The driving forces in this area have considerably less to do with the political organization of a particular economy than with its location along a trajectory of industrial growth; when one compares capitalist with socialist economies at similar stages of industrial development, they evince surprisingly similar patterns of income distribution. Moreover, *all* industrial and industrializing societies show patterns of inequality that, to a large extent, resist political intervention. By what criterion is inequality to be deemed "sometimes" acceptable, sometimes not? Rather than fixing on the elusive ideal of "equality," those with a professed concern for the poor might consider absolute rather than relative standards of living. If such a criterion were applied to American society (and indeed to the other societies of industrial capitalism), the level of "moral acceptability" would surely rank among the highest in human history.

So much for the bishops' diagnosis of the domestic scene. Their policy recommendations present rather a mixed bag. They call for a commitment to "full employment," which, following current convention, is defined as 3-4 percent unemployment. By contrast, a level of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

6-7 percent unemployment is termed, again, "unacceptable," although we are not told by what superior moral insight the bishops find themselves able to accept the former but bound to condemn (prophetically?) the latter. To deal with poverty, or the "glaring disparities of wealth and income," they recommend tax reform; self-help programs among the poor to be stimulated by government; affirmative action, "judiciously administered"; improved child-care services; something that sounds like comparable worth ("persons who make comparable contributions to society are entitled to comparable rewards"); and welfare reform (for example, by legislating national eligibility standards and by removing provisions that penalize employment).

Different readers will find different items here on which to agree or disagree with the bishops. Some of their recommendations are quite sensible, although one must wonder why the authority of Catholic moral teaching has to be invoked to support, say, job-training programs. As for the overall strategy for dealing with the social and economic problems of America, it is Left-of-Center, corresponding remarkably with the agenda proposed by the Democratic-party platform of 1984. And, like that platform, it can be described as modeled on an essentially European vision of social democracy.

I do not wish to be misunderstood on this point. The bishops do explicitly repudiate a collectivist ethic of economic life, and in this their document compares favorably with the 1983 statement by the Catholic bishops of Canada, which was indeed a massive attack on capitalism and, at least implicitly, an endorsement of socialism. One should be grateful for small favors: far better an American Catholic document that reads like a translation from Swedish than from Albanian. Yet it is ironic that the Catholic episcopate of the United States, feeling fully a part of American society and no longer constrained by the formerly marginal position of Catholics in that society, should find so little to learn from the American experience. In this, once again, the Simon/Novak document shows much greater ingenuity.

When we come to the area of economic relations between the United States and the Third World, the predispositions of the bishops become if anything easier to pinpoint. The footnotes refer us to Mahbub ul Haq, Jan Tinbergen, Barbara Ward, and, prominently, to the report of the Brandt Commission—all well-known sources for the view that the economic distress of the Third World is attributable to an "unjust international economic order." On the role of the multinationals in the Third World, there are references to the publications of the United Nations Center on Transnational Corporations, which are animated by a strong antagonism to capitalism, and to the 1974 book by Ronald Müller and Richard J. Barnet, *Global Reach*, which has become a basic source of anti-multinational propaganda. There are on the other hand no references to the work of Raymond Vernon, the most balanced analyst of this matter, and none to such pro-capitalist authors as P.T. Bauer and Melvyn Krauss. Thus, simply by consulting the sources relied upon by the bishops, one can pretty much predict what in fact the document delivers—a moderate (as opposed to radical) version of *tercermundismo*, or Third Worldism (to use the term coined, pejoratively, by the Venezuelan writer Carlos Rangel).

Morally this perspective may be inspired by a genuine concern for the poor, but empirically it is informed by a number of dubious assumptions. Foremost among these is the idea that much if not all of Third World poverty is due to dependency on the rich nations. In fact, however, as Bauer and others have pointed out, there appears to be, if anything, a *reverse* relation between poverty and dependency in Third World countries. Another false assumption of the bishops, implicit rather than explicit, has to do with their notion of the relevant parties to economic development. Thus, in their list of "actors" in international economic relations they mention nation-states, multilateral institutions (such as the World Bank), and multinational corporations; they completely omit the most important actors—individuals and businesses engaged in enterprise within Third World economies. That omission, more perhaps than anything else, reveals the flawed optics of the bishops' analysis.

The specific criticisms and recommendations of the bishops follow logically from their underlying assumptions. We are told that there must be "basic reform" in the international economic system, a "fundamental recasting, not simply a modification, of the present system." What they have in mind, alas, is something along the lines of the "New International Economic Order," a project whose guiding premise is that Third World governments represent the Third World poor, and are truly interested in alleviating their condition. There are, to be sure, instances in which this premise holds; but there are at least as many, if not more, in which it does not. In such cases, economic development, if it is to take place at all, will do so in spite of or even against the policies of the government. A "fundamental recasting" of the world economy in the form the bishops propose would only make development more difficult.

Along the same lines, the bishops want discussions between richer and poorer nations, aimed at a reform of the world economy. Here too they embrace a favorite item in the Third World agenda, that of a "North/South dialogue" (also called "global negotiations"). By definition, such a dialogue must take place among governments—including governments whose economic and other policies are inimical to development and thereby antagonistic to the interests of the poor in their own countries.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A similar point can be made about the priority the bishops would give in the Third World to the "basic human needs of the poor." This sounds unobjectionable, but the term "basic needs" is not innocent. It implies a particular strategy, one emphasizing immediate redistribution as against long-term economic growth; this is a strategy that carries with it great risks and human costs, and that is by no means self-evidently worthy of being singled out for favored moral distinction. Indeed, the "basic-needs" approach has been sharply criticized in the Third World itself, where it has been characterized as a paternalistic device for giving "welfare" without inquiring as to how underlying economic structures can in fact be permanently improved.

WHAT policies, then, should the United States adopt toward the Third World? According to the bishops, the United States (or, more precisely, the Reagan administration) views the Third World too much through the prism of "East/West" relations. But if so, this is due not to some perverse myopia but to the facts of energetic Soviet expansion throughout the Third World. The United States, say the bishops, gives too much military aid as compared with other forms. Again, is this traceable to moral perversity or is it a response to events on the international scene that are not of American making? The United States, the litany proceeds, favors bilateral aid when what is needed is aid through multilateral institutions. But experience has shown that bilateral programs are more easily monitored in terms of results, and less likely to be absorbed into the cesspool of corruption all too often characterizing Third World political structures. The United States is accused by the bishops of giving too little aid as a percentage of gross national product. This assumes that the more aid, the more development—a very questionable assumption indeed; it also assumes, no less dubiously, that government aid is more beneficent than the activities of private business.

To replace current policies, the bishops also make a number of specific recommendations, none of real merit. There should be an international equivalent of affirmative action: in view of the less than spectacular success of these policies in improving the condition of their intended beneficiaries domestically, the bishops' faith in their efficacy on the international level seems a little misplaced. There should be less military aid and fewer arms sales: a *pium desideratum*, to be sure, but addressed with at least equal propriety to the Kremlin, Colonel Qaddafi, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (to mention but a few of the "actors" whose collaboration on this agenda would have to be secured). The United States should devise more favorable trade arrangements with Third World countries: definitely, but any such trade benefits to the Third World would be in tension not only with the goal of full employment for Americans that the bishops endorse but with their demand for a turning-away from "consumerism." Some Third World debts should be forgiven: perhaps, but what would this do to the future credit needs of Third World governments? The United States should give more aid, especially through the International Development Association: doubtful. Private investment in Third World countries should be "appropriate" to their economies: probably so, but who is to make such judgments?

Not all the bishops' criticisms of current American policies in the Third World are misplaced; most are. Not all the bishops' positive recommendations are bad; most are. The problems of underdevelopment will not be solved by international agreement among governments, useful though some of these may be. Nor can development be fostered primarily by state actions either on the national or international level. The principal "actors" in the drama of development are people engaged, alone or in conjunction with others, in economically productive enterprises. There *are* cases of successful development in what only a few years ago were very poor countries—such as South Korea or Taiwan. And there are lessons to be drawn from the experience of these countries. But the bishops are in a very bad position to learn them. For, as in the case of their approach to poor American Catholics who have attained affluence, they never ask the most important question: just *how* does a society move from poverty to affluence?

IT IS this question, by contrast, that most interests the lay commission. Its report, of course, appeals to the same Catholic social teachings as do the bishops, citing the same papal encyclicals and invoking the same basic principles: human dignity, the social nature of man, social justice. But the report also finds that the American political economy embodies a number of moral principles that Catholics ought to approve of: free association, cooperation, and "self-interest, rightly understood." All this is related by the lay commission to the Christian notion of "co-creation": human beings, in their activity, "following the clues left by God."

Thus there is, according to Simon and Novak, an "innate virtue" to enterprise. They are careful not to leave the impression that they endorse every aspect of capitalism in practice, or that they oppose government action to remedy particular social ills. But they do point to two linkages that the bishops totally ignore—that between capitalism and democracy, and that between capitalism and successful economic development. They assert these connections not on grounds of doctrine, but on the basis of readily available empirical evidence: there is not a single democracy in the world that is not part of the capitalist world economy, and there is not a single non-capitalist case of successful economic development in the Third World. Thus, precisely on the grounds of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the "preferential option for the poor," Simon and Novak come out on the side of capitalism.

Although some of their specific recommendations are not too different from those of the bishops—for example, on employment-generation, or on the question of free trade—the whole tone of the Simon/Novak document is very different. Where the bishops mainly criticize America, while allowing that it deserves some praise, the lay commission mainly praises America, while conceding that there is room for criticism and improvement. In this difference, it is fair to say, the two documents faithfully reflect the two political parties in the country today.

WELL, one might ask, what is the harm in that? By way of an answer, imagine for a moment that the bishops had issued the document signed by Simon and Novak. If so, they would certainly have earned a higher grade in economic and political competence; but would we really want them to be blessing American capitalism and its works, any more than we would want them to denigrate them? What, in that event, about Catholics who happen to believe that American capitalism *is* "morally unacceptable"? Should they be read out of the community of faith? These questions touch on a vital theological issue, the manner in which social and political partisanship endangers one of the essential *notae ecclesiae*, or "marks of the Church": namely, its catholicity.

The bishops claim that the application of their ethical presuppositions and their method of reasoning to the subject at hand constitutes a major contribution, both for Catholics and non-Catholics. But Simon and Novak, drawing on the same ethical presuppositions and the same method of reasoning, have come to very different conclusions. The fact that Catholic moral teaching is so flexible as to lend legitimacy to such opposed perspectives on reality raises serious questions about the alleged contribution of this method of moral reasoning. Both major political camps find it amenable to their views. The pity is that the official Church, which has better things to do, should be lining up on one side.

In both the present document and in their 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace, the Catholic bishops are increasingly sounding like the left wing of the Democratic party gathered for prayer. From one perspective, I suppose, this development could be seen as a step in the "indigenization" of American Catholicism. But not quite in the way envisaged by the bishops. For in their political and ideological positioning, the Catholic bishops are following in the well-worn footsteps of a major segment of official mainline Protestantism. If their pastoral letter reads in places like a translation from the Swedish, it is also, minus a few papal quotations, reminiscent of the social-action pronouncements of the United Methodist Church. This, given the fact that what we are supposed to have here at last is the voice of a Catholic community fully at home in America, is to my mind profoundly sad.

There is here, finally, a great missed opportunity. If any role in the social and political arena is natural for official spokesmen of religion, it is the role of mediators. For Catholics, their bishops may serve as teachers of moral doctrine. There are, in addition, specific evils in society that Christian bishops should publicly condemn ("prophetically," if you will): racial oppression and anti-Semitism are clear candidates. But is it incumbent upon bishops of the Church to get into the details of policy alternatives? Would it not be more useful if they were to raise incisive moral questions and put them to *all* partisans? The Simon/Novak document represents a clear example of Catholics coming out on one side of a particular set of issues. Others have come out on the other side. In a society increasingly polarized by political and ideological issues, bishops and other religious spokesmen are in a unique position to mediate, to challenge, to civilize. But as in labor/management relations, one cannot be a mediator and a partisan at the same time.

Archbishop Weakland and others remind us that the pastoral letter is only a first draft, and there is a year remaining for second thoughts. Given the dynamics of this sort of process, one cannot be hopeful that the document adopted by the full assembly of bishops will differ significantly from this draft, or will reverse its basic thrust. Thus, at the end of the year the bishops of the Catholic Church in America will have taken another major step toward a fairly narrow political partisanship. Since many of their people are evidently moving in a different political direction, this will create practical problems for the bishops (as it has for Methodist bishops). For many Catholics it may also occasion serious anguish.

AS FOR the rest of us, if the bishops were simply engaged here in an academic exercise, we could say that they are not doing a very impressive job of it and be done. Their claim, however, is much more ambitious. They insist that they are engaged in a morally informed understanding, indeed, that they are exercising a "prophetic mandate" based on the "preferential option for the poor." In the end, therefore, a moral judgment of their performance is also called for.

No one can be sure what the outcome of any sound policy will be, but there is good reason to believe that the strategy to which the bishops are committing the prestige of the Church may end by harming rather than helping the poor. Human lives are at stake: by what right, then, do these men appear before us, wrapped in the mantle of authority of prophets and popes stretching back to ancient Israel, and dare to tell us that one set of highly precarious policy choices represents the will of God in our time?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From Clapham to Bloomsbury: A Genealogy of Morals

Gertrude Himmelfarb

"For the Englishman," Nietzsche wrote in 1889, "morality is not yet a problem." The English thought that religion was no longer needed as a "guarantee of morality," that morality could be known "intuitively." But that illusion was itself a reflection of the persistent strength and depth among them of the Christian "ascendancy." Forgetting the religious origin of their morality, they also forgot the "highly conditional nature of its right to exist." If Christianity should ever lose that ascendancy, Nietzsche implied, morality would be deprived of even that tenuous hold on reality and would then truly become a "problem."

A generation later morality was very much a problem, and for precisely the reasons Nietzsche foresaw. It was not a problem, to be sure, for the mass of Englishmen. But then Nietzsche was not thinking of the mass, the "slave class," who mindlessly observed the moral rules and conventions sanctified by time. He was thinking of the "priestly aristocracy," or its modern equivalent, the "ruling caste" of philosophers, scholars, and aesthetes—what Coleridge and Mill had called the national "clerisy" and what more recently has gone under the name of the "intellectual aristocracy." Noel Annan, who has written the classic study of that intellectual aristocracy, required ten genealogical charts to trace the lineage of some of its central characters. But it would require something like a three-dimensional chart to show their literary, philosophic, philanthropic, and political relationships, as well as those of blood and marriage. And it would require nothing less than a history of modern England to draw out all the implications of that tangled web. Yet the line of intellectual and spiritual development, the genealogy of morals, is fairly simple and straightforward. Indeed it is very much as Nietzsche predicted.

Gertrude Himmelfarb is Distinguished Professor of History at the Graduate School of the City University of New York. Her books include *Victorian Minds*, *On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill*, and, most recently, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age*. The present article will appear in a forthcoming volume, *Marriage and Morals Among the Victorians and Other Essays*, to be published by Knopf.

It took one century for that genealogy to work itself out, a century encapsulated in the opening sentence of an essay by E. M. Forster: "Hannah More was the godmother of my great-aunt." In good aristocratic fashion, Forster did not deign to identify his characters. He did quote some gems from Hannah More: "Going to the opera, like getting drunk, is a sin that carries its own punishment with it, and that a very severe one"; and "He who is taught arithmetic on a Sunday when a boy, will, when a man, open his shop on a Sunday." But he did not bother to explain that More was a leading figure in the "moral reformation" movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the campaign to reform rich and poor alike by persuading the rich to give up their dissipations (the opera) and the poor theirs (drink). Nor did he explain that More's strictures against the teaching of arithmetic on Sunday did not apply to the teaching of reading: she was, in fact, a vigorous advocate of Sunday schools (she personally founded and subsidized several such schools), which played an important part in the advance of literacy among the poor.

Hannah More was not only the godmother of Forster's great-aunt, Marianne Thornton; she was a friend and associate of his great-grandfather, Henry Thornton. Banker, philanthropist, and Member of Parliament, Thornton is principally known as one of the founders of the Clapham Sect, the influential group of Evangelicals whose most notable public achievement was the abolition of the slave trade. (He was, in fact, responsible for the name of the group, since it was his home in Clapham, shared for some years by William Wilberforce, that served as its headquarters and attracted other Evangelicals to that remote part of London.) In another essay, Forster assigned to Thornton "two claims on the notice of posterity": an essay on paper credit, which had the distinction of being reissued more than a century later with an introduction by Friedrich Hayek, and a best-selling volume, *Family Prayers*, which continued to provide royalties for the family even into Forster's own time. The conjunction of the two works seems to make of Clapham an unholy union of commerce and piety. Only at the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

very end of the essay did Forster consider the possibility that posterity might also remember his great-grandfather as the man who helped free the slaves. But this fact, belatedly noted, was somewhat discounted by the observation that while it was a great work, it "now needs all doing over again," for while Thornton was acutely aware of the evils of slavery, he was totally insensitive to the evils of "commercialism."

Had Forster's friend, Lytton Strachey, been writing of the Clapham Sect he would have been frankly contemptuous of those high-minded Evangelicals who drew their spiritual sustenance from prayer, their material sustenance from commerce, and their moral sustenance from philanthropy. That was not Forster's tone. He was tolerant, even respectful, of his ancestors, making it clear that so far from being bigoted or hypocritical, they were intelligent, cultivated, urbane, humane, their religiosity expressing itself more in moral conduct and good works than in theological dogma or rituals. But he did not conceal his own sense of remoteness from them, a remoteness not diminished by his childhood memories of Clapham or by his considerable knowledge of the family history. His biography of Marianne Thornton is a period piece, charming but slight, as if any serious work might have obliged him to be more critical. Read in the context of his own life and work, it only serves to accentuate the enormous distance between the Clapham of his forebears and the Cambridge and Bloomsbury that were his own natural habitats.

At one point, introducing another prominent member of the Clapham Sect, Forster asked, "Who on earth was Zachary Macaulay?" to which he replied, "Mr. R. C. Trevelyan's great-grandfather." It was a typical Forster (and Bloomsbury) ploy: to reduce the sublime, so to speak, to the ridiculous, the Clapham worthy to the Bloomsbury acolyte. R. C. Trevelyan (Bob Trevy, as he appears in the memoirs of his Bloomsbury friends) was a minor poet and playwright, "amusing but vague to a degree," as Lytton Strachey described him. Zachary Macaulay would surely have preferred to be identified as the great-grandfather of G. M. Trevelyan, Regius Professor of History at Cambridge, or, better yet, as the father of T.B. Macaulay, one of England's greatest historians.

T.B. Macaulay was not only the historian-laureate of Victorian England; he was a perfect specimen of the second-generation Evangelical. Lacking the religious fervor of his father, he cherished the moral and civic values that he knew to be the bequest of that Evangelical heritage. When he criticized Bentham's utilitarianism, it was on the ground that such a philosophy could not satisfy the moral instincts of men, the need for an "ought" that was not identical with the "is," a sense of obligation that was not the same as self-interest. Christianity provided that additional element, he explained, because it held out the prospect of an "infinite happiness thereafter" in compensation for whatever sacrifice of happiness was required in the pursuit of duty on earth. "This is practical philosophy. . . . A man is told to do something which otherwise he would not do, and is furnished with a new motive for doing it." It was, to be sure, a "practical philosophy" based upon a much attenuated religion. But even in that form, as a kind of evangelized utilitarianism, it was far removed from the secularized utilitarianism of the Benthamites—and still farther removed from the later philosophy of Bloomsbury which provided no ground, either in utility or in religion, for doing anything save what one wanted to do.

A SIMILAR intellectual and moral lineage can be traced in other families that were in a direct line of descent from Clapham to Bloomsbury. James Stephen, a passionate Evangelical and dedicated abolitionist, moved to Clapham to be close to the sect and married into it when he took as his second wife Wilberforce's widowed sister. Like the Macaulays, each generation of Stephens witnessed a successive diminution of religious faith. Leslie Stephen, the grandson of James and the father of four of the charter members of Bloomsbury, was so far gone in disbelief as to call himself an agnostic. But like most agnostics of that late Victorian generation, he believed irreligion to be entirely compatible with the most rigorous and conventional morality. His credo was simple: "I now believe in nothing, but I do not the less believe in morality etc., etc. I mean to live and die like a gentleman if possible." His *Science of Ethics* was one of many attempts to base ethics upon evolution and altruism upon egoism, and it was no more successful than the others. But the impulse behind it was clear: to provide a "scientific" basis for a moral code that made the good of others more compelling than the good of oneself. If that secular moral code, the code of a "gentleman," separated him from the Clapham of his grandfather, it separated him still more from the Bloomsbury of his children.

Not all the members of Bloomsbury traced their descent from Clapham. But most of them were related to that "intellectual aristocracy" which, by the end of the century, included some of the most notable Victorian names: Macaulay, Trevelyan, Tennyson, Wilberforce, Thornton, Stephen, Strachey, Fry, Wedgwood, Darwin, Huxley, Arnold, Thackeray, Booth. (Conspicuous omissions in this aristocracy are Mill, Carlyle, Ruskin, Eliot, and Newman, who, for one reason or another, left no progeny.)

Those who were not related by blood or marriage developed even closer ties in the still more exclusive aristocracy spawned by Cambridge. All of the men later identified with Bloomsbury (with the exception of Duncan Grant) had been at Cambridge, and most of them had belonged to that most coveted and select society, the Apostles. Since membership in the Apostles was a lifetime affair,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the few undergraduates ("embryos") fortunate enough to receive that distinction had the privilege of associating with the "angels" of previous generations. Thus Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, Maynard Keynes, and Saxon Sydney-Turner found themselves, in the Saturday evening meetings of the society, engaged in discussion with G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, Roger Fry, E. M. Forster, Desmond MacCarthy, and others who were to become lifelong friends. (Clive Bell was one of the few Bloomsbury men who was not an Apostle, and he felt the slight all his life.) In a sense Bloomsbury was to be another kind of select society, a continuation of university life in the more bohemian environs of London, close to the center of literary and artistic life and far from the respectable, conventional homes of their parents.

IF "VICTORIANISM," in the familiar sense of that word, antedated the reign of Queen Victoria (a good case can be made for locating its origins in Evangelicalism), it did not long survive the death of the Queen. It was a nice accident of history that Edward VII, that very un-Victorian Prince of Wales, should have ascended to the throne in January 1901, thus inaugurating a new century as well as a new era. Three years later Leslie Stephen died and shortly afterward his children moved from the family house in Kensington to the then unfashionable Bloomsbury. It was to be, his daughter Virginia was determined, the beginning of a new life. "Everything was going to be new; everything was going to be different. Everything was on trial."

By the end of the decade (and the end of Edward's reign), Bloomsbury had become the home, or home away from home, for Vanessa, Virginia, and Adrian Stephen (the older brother Thoby having died a few years earlier), Clive Bell (married to Vanessa), Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Duncan Grant, Desmond MacCarthy, Roger Fry, and Saxon Sydney-Turner; Leonard Woolf joined his old Cambridge friends when he returned from India in 1911 (and married Virginia the following year). This was the hard core of Bloomsbury. As with all such groups there was a circle of fellow-travelers or sympathizers, which included E. M. Forster, James Strachey (Lytton's brother and the translator of Freud), R. C. Trevelyan, Francis Birrell, and others who drifted in and out of the Bloomsbury orbit. And as with all such groups, there were those among them who insisted that they were too varied to constitute a group. The disclaimer is disingenuous; no one has suggested that they were homogeneous or monolithic. But they did have a good deal in common, and they did think of themselves, and others thought of them, as "Bloomsbury." They were, in fact, more organized than most such groups, gathering regularly before the war at Thursday soirées in Bloomsbury (Saturday evenings being reserved for the Apostles at Cambridge), and during the 20's and 30's meeting as a Memoir Club for the express purpose of reminiscing about themselves. (At one time the painters among them met on Fridays and another group on Tuesdays for the reading of plays.)

If the "Bloomsberries" (again their term) did not review each other's books quite as consistently and effusively as their enemies claimed, they certainly had more opportunities than most to do so. In the 20's Leonard Woolf became literary editor of the *Nation* (after it had been reorganized financially by Keynes), while Desmond MacCarthy was literary editor of the *New Statesman* and, later, the senior literary critic of the *Sunday Times*. And it is not many such groups that can boast their own publishing house, the Hogarth Press, which even had its own printing press. Nor was it only the literary faction of Bloomsbury that was so well-connected. Roger Fry's first Post-Impressionist exhibit of 1910 had been exclusively French, but his second, two years later, was more cosmopolitan; of the nine English painters, three were pure Bloomsbury—Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Fry himself—and the non-Bloomsbury painter, Wyndham Lewis, was represented by a portrait of Lytton Strachey. Clive Bell, who was later to protest that they were not a group, suggested to Fry in 1917 that he paint a "great historical group portrait of Bloomsbury." Fry himself did not paint such a portrait, but Vanessa started to do one of "Old Bloomsbury," the original group. Although that picture was never finished, she later painted one of the group which included the younger generation, with portraits of the deceased members in the background.

Bloomsbury was, in fact, as much a group (or circle or coterie) as Clapham was a sect. And it performed something of the same function, setting the tone and agenda for the cultural "vanguard" of the nation. Where Clapham had inspired a moral and spiritual reformation, Bloomsbury sought to effect a moral and spiritual liberation—a liberation from Clapham itself and from those vestiges of Evangelicalism and Victorianism that still persisted in the early 20th century. If Bloomsbury was not much concerned with religion, of the Evangelical or any other variety, it was because its parent generation had already abandoned conventional religion. What had not yet been abandoned by that older generation, however, was a moral and social ethic that was as compelling as the religious ethic of Clapham. The late Victorians were as philanthropic-minded as the early Evangelicals, but lacking the religious imperative for philanthropy, they made of it a science and a profession. Instead of founding Sunday schools, they instituted a system of compulsory day schools; instead of improving the morals and manners of the poor, they improved their housing and working conditions; instead of engaging in family prayers, they observed the moral proprieties that had become a surrogate for religious pieties. (There were, of course, mavericks among the late Victorians: Oscar Wilde, Max Beerbohm, Aubrey Beard-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sley, Arthur Symons, and the other *fin-de-siècle* "aesthetes" and "decadents." But they never had anything like the influence of Bloomsbury; and Bloomsbury itself felt no connection with them.)

IT WAS against the whole of this late Victorian ethos, the public and the private, that Bloomsbury rebelled. "How does one come by one's morality?" Virginia Woolf asked. "Surely by reading the poets." It was an answer that would have appalled her father, who suspected poetry of being a prescription for immorality, an invitation to be "morbid" and "unmanly," to indulge one's private emotions and fancies at the expense of one's personal and public duties. In invoking poetry as a source of morality, Virginia was claiming for aesthetics that absolute, peremptory quality her father had assigned to ethics. And in making the novel a species of poetry, as she tried to do, she was removing it from the domain of social reality where it might have intimations of social morality. The true novel, Virginia Woolf maintained, was held together not by a story or plot but by the emotions of the author. "She is a poet," Forster said of her, "who wants to write something as near to a novel as possible."

As Virginia Woolf made a morality of poetry, so Roger Fry and Clive Bell made a religion of art. "Art is a religion. It is an expression of and a means to states of mind as holy as any that men are capable of experiencing." It was, moreover, the distinctively modern form of religion. "It is toward art that modern minds turn, not only for the most perfect expression of transcendent emotion, but for an inspiration by which to live." That "inspiration" was entirely private and personal, not a way to live in society but a way to live with oneself, with one's own feelings and sensibilities. True art was autonomous: "completely self-consistent, self-supporting, and self-contained —constructions which do not stand for something else, but appear to have ultimate value and in that sense to be real."

When Virginia Woolf made her famous pronouncement, "In or about December 1910, human character changed," she may have chosen that date because of the Post-Impressionist exhibit of that time which had so altered the artistic sensibilities of the generation. But her more immediate frame of reference was literary—the passage from the "social realism," as we would now say, of the Edwardian writers (H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy) to the "impressionism" of the Georgians (E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, Lytton Strachey, James Joyce, and, of course, herself). For the former, the novel was inseparable from external reality; it was incomplete without an account of the social milieu or physical surroundings. For the latter, it was self-sufficient, a thing-in-itself; its world was what the author chose to make of it.

If the modern novel was, in this sense, free, unconstrained by reality, so was the modern author. The "human character" that changed in December 1910 was the character of the artist, not of the common man. Ordinary people were bound, as they had always been, by the habits and customs devised for "timid natures who dare not allow their souls free play." But writers and artists could no longer be so circumscribed; they had to be free to follow the "vast variety and turmoil of human impulses." Their own characters were as autonomous as the characters they created. To look upon them as ordinary people, to place them "under an obligation to others," to put them in the position of "living for others, not for ourselves," was to violate their nature and endanger their calling.

This was the Bloomsbury credo: living for "ourselves." Not, significantly, for "oneself." The Bloomsberries were not Nietzscheans, "proud solitaries . . . hard, strict, continent, heroic," each drawing upon his own inner resources to resist the conventions and illusions of his culture. They derived their strength and independence from each other. If they recognized no obligations to "others," to society at large, they did recognize (in their own perverse fashion) a loyalty to each other. Like the Apostles who professed to find only themselves "real" and referred to everyone else as "phenomena," the Bloomsberries extended their affections only to their intimates; for the rest of the world they had at best an amused tolerance, at worst (and more often) an undisguised contempt. It was because they were so conspicuously a group that they were able to found an "adversary culture" strong enough to challenge the bourgeois culture. And it was for this reason too that they were spared the total solipsism that would otherwise have been their individual fates.

THE basic tenets of Bloomsbury derived from the philosophy of G. E. Moore. For Virginia the move to Bloomsbury in 1904 was the beginning of a new life. For most of the men in the group—her brother Thoby, her future husband Leonard Woolf and her future brother-in-law Clive Bell, her friends Lytton Strachey, Maynard Keynes, and Desmond MacCarthy—the beginning came in Cambridge several months earlier with the publication of Moore's *Principia Ethica*. "I date from October 1903," Strachey wrote Moore at the time, "the beginning of the Age of Reason." Keynes, in retrospect, was even more rhapsodic. "It was exciting, exhilarating, the beginning of a renaissance, the opening of a new heaven on a new earth, we were the forerunners of a new dispensation, we were not afraid of anything." Again and again in the pronouncements of Bloomsbury one hears that triumphal acclaim of the new. Thus Vanessa Bell: "A great new freedom seemed about to come." Or Leonard Woolf: "We were out to construct something new. . . . We were in the van of the builders of a new society which should be free, rational, civilized."

Moore, the author of that new dispensation, was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only a few years older than his disciples. (Keynes was twenty and Strachey twenty-three when the *Principia* appeared; Moore himself, having earlier discussed many of the ideas of the book with the Apostles, was all of twenty-eight when he started to write it and not quite thirty when it was published.) For these young men the *Principia* was a manifesto of liberation, a release from the old morality and, they suspected, from all morality. The heart of the book, as they read it, was the last chapter, "The Ideal," where Moore argued that the fundamental truth of moral philosophy involved "states of consciousness" (not, as traditional moral philosophy had it, of conscience), and that the highest states of consciousness were "the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects." These were the only "goods in themselves," desirable *"purely for their own sakes"*; they included *"all* the greatest, and *by far* the greatest, goods we can imagine."

If Bloomsbury had any philosophy it was this: a total commitment to "personal affections" and "aesthetic enjoyments." This was not, to be sure, the whole of Moore's philosophy. But it was the part that appealed to the Cambridge undergraduates and Apostles who later made up Bloomsbury. Even Virginia Woolf, who had no taste for philosophy, read the *Principia* in 1908, persevering in spite of great difficulties; according to Leonard Woolf, Moore was the only philosopher to have influenced her. (The book appears in the novel she started to write in 1909, *The Voyage Out*, where the reader is expected to recognize it by its familiar dark brown binding.)

While Moore himself was not a "member" of Bloomsbury (he did not attend Virginia's Thursday "evenings," although his work was often discussed there), he remained a presence in the lives of Keynes, Woolf, Bell, and the others. Long after they left Cambridge, they continued to see each other at meetings of the Apostles and at the reading parties organized by Moore.

In a memoir read to the surviving members of Bloomsbury many years later, Keynes spoke movingly of Moore's effect upon them. They accepted, he explained, Moore's "religion" while discarding his "morals." "Indeed, in our opinion, one of the greatest advantages of his religion, was that it made morals unnecessary—meaning by 'religion' one's attitude toward oneself and the ultimate and by 'morals' one's attitude toward the outside world and the intermediate." What they did not accept was the feeble concession to conventional morality in the penultimate chapter of the *Principia*, where Moore suggested that in those cases where one was unable to foresee the long-term consequences of any particular mode of conduct, one should observe the existing rules of morality. This, Keynes insisted, violated the most important principle of Bloomsbury:

> We repudiated entirely customary morals, conventions, and traditional wisdom. We were, that is to say, in the strict sense of the term, immoralists. The consequences of being found out had, of course, to be considered for what they were worth. But we recognized no moral obligation on us, no inner sanction, to conform or to obey. Before heaven we claimed to be our own judge in our own case.

WHAT Bloomsbury took from Moore was a philosophy that sanctioned, if not immorality, then at the very least amorality. For the "states of consciousness" that were at the heart of that philosophy had nothing to do with conduct or consequences. "Being good" was their objective, not "doing good." And being good was being in those heightened states of consciousness, those "timeless, passionate states of contemplation and communion" which were conducive to "love, beauty, and truth"—not virtue. And even love, beauty, and truth were carefully delineated so as to remove any taint of utility or morality. Useless knowledge was deemed preferable to useful; corporeal beauty to mental qualities; present and immediately realizable goods to remote or indirect ones. Thus, Keynes recalled, Bloomsbury "lived entirely in present experience," repudiating not only the idea of "duty" but any kind of "social action," and not only social action but the "life of action generally," a life that might entail such disagreeable pursuits as "power, politics, success, wealth, ambition."

Writing thirty-five years after the delivery of the "new dispensation," when he himself, having engaged very successfully in a life of action, had achieved a fair measure of the goods of that life, Keynes was able to be wry and even critical about some aspects of the Bloomsbury creed. It was based, he came to realize, upon too rational and utopian a view of human nature; it did not appreciate how thin and precarious the crust of civilization was, how dependent men were upon "customary morals, conventions, and traditional wisdom."

That judgment, made in the fall of 1938, on the eve of World War II, did not require great insight or boldness. More remarkable is the fact that even at that time and at his mature age, Keynes should have taken the occasion to reaffirm the essential tenets of the creed. Whatever its faults, he found it still "nearer the truth than any other that I know, with less irrelevant extraneous matter and nothing to be ashamed of." In retrospect he was confident that "this religion of ours was a very good one to grow up under." And not only to grow up under but to live with, for it was still, he went on to say, "my religion under the surface." Nor did he shrink from the implication of that "religion": "I remain, and always will remain, an immoralist." Keynes did not claim that Moore was an "immoralist"; what he did say was that Bloomsbury found in Moore's philosophy the rationale for immoralism. This interpretation of Moore was not peculiar to Bloomsbury. Beatrice Webb deplored the influence of the *Principia* on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bertrand Russell and some of the young Fabians. "I never can see anything in it, except a metaphysical justification for doing what you like and what other people disapprove of!"

IN ONE SENSE Keynes is the most interesting of the group, because he defied at least one of its precepts. He not only lived a "life of action," he did so in the most bourgeois and materialistic of professions. If it was partly accident that originally drew him to economics, it was talent and ambition that kept him there. Yet even while pursuing that sordid occupation, at Cambridge and at the Treasury, he made it clear that he regarded economics as a separate and altogether inferior sphere of life and that he personally deplored any emphasis on economic motives or criteria. Bertrand Russell recalled that while Keynes "escaped into the great world," he did so with the air of a "bishop *in partibus*"; when he ventured forth into the mundane world of economics or politics, "he left his soul at home."*

In fact something of the "soul" of Bloomsbury penetrated even into Keynes's economic theories. There is a discernible connection between the Bloomsbury ethos, which put a premium on immediate and present satisfactions, and Keynesian economics, which is based entirely on the short run and precludes any long-term judgments. (Keynes's famous remark, "In the long run we are all dead," also has an obvious connection with his homosexuality—what Schumpeter delicately spoke of as his "childless vision.") The ethos was reflected as well in the Keynesian doctrine that consumption rather than saving is the source of economic growth—indeed, that thrift is economically and socially harmful. In *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, written long before *The General Theory*, Keynes voiced his suspicion of the "virtue" of saving. The capitalists, he said, deluded the working classes into thinking that their interests were best served by saving rather than consuming. That delusion was part of the age-old Puritan fallacy:

> The duty of "saving" became nine-tenths of virtue and the growth of the cake the object of true religion. There grew round the non-consumption of the cake all those instincts of puritanism which in other ages has withdrawn itself from the world and has neglected the arts of production as well as those of enjoyment. And so the cake increased; but to what end was not clearly contemplated. Individuals would be exhorted not so much to abstain as to defer, and to cultivate the pleasures of security and anticipation. Saving was for old age or for your children; but this was only in theory—the virtue of the cake was that it was never to be consumed, neither by you nor by your children after you.

In his public life as well, Keynes kept faith with Bloomsbury, in spite of the suspicions of his friends. Although he was much criticized for not resigning from the Treasury in protest against World War I, he managed to oppose the war in his own way, and perhaps more effectively than he might have done had he retired to private life. He used his official position, for example, to promote the view that military conscription and food rationing were both unnecessary and impractical and that Britain's resources were inadequate for a serious, full-scale war. And he intervened on several occasions on behalf of friends who were seeking to be relieved of military service on the ground of conscientious objection. He himself, like most of the Bloomsbury men, applied for exemption on that ground and withdrew his application only when he decided to continue at the Treasury and thus was automatically exempt. Whatever discretion he exercised in public, to his friends he made no secret of his hostility to the war. When the proposals for peace talks broke down late in 1917, he wrote to Duncan Grant: "I work for a government I despise for ends I think criminal." Nor did he think better of the British government or its allies at the Versailles Conference. *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, published in 1920, had something of the same tone and character as Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* which had appeared the previous year, Lloyd George, Wilson, and Clemenceau seeming to be as hypocritical and venal as Cardinal Manning, Dr. Arnold, and General Gordon.

World War I, which took so heavy a toll among just that class represented by Bloomsbury (and which is so movingly described in Robert Graves's *Good-bye to All That*), left Bloomsbury itself with no casualties. The only ones to come anywhere near the front lines were Desmond MacCarthy who was with the Red Cross in the first winter of the war, and David Garnett who served briefly with a Friends' ambulance unit. The rest were either excused from military service for medical reasons or were conscientious objectors assigned to farm labor. Grant and Garnett, for example, spent the last years of the war at Charleston, a farm in Sussex rented by the Bells. Only four miles from the home of the Woolfs, Charleston became the wartime center of the clan—"Bloomsbury-by-the-Sea," Quentin Bell called it.

Even in its opposition to the war, Bloomsbury distinguished itself from other conscientious ob-

* Leonard Woolf also ventured into the "great world"; he was an active member of the Fabian Society, served on parliamentary commissions, and was deeply involved in Labor party politics. (He once even sought a seat in Parliament.) But then Woolf was never regarded as a full-fledged member of the clan. In his novel, *The Wise Virgins*, a *roman à clef* written while he was courting Virginia, one character complains, "You talk and you talk and you talk—no blood in you! You never *do* anything." When his friend asks why he thinks it important to do things, he replies, "Why? Because I'm a Jew, I tell you—I'm a Jew." No one in that circle ever forgot that Woolf was a Jew, least of all Virginia (although she was very grateful to him and, in her way, loved him). Years later, she recalled, "How I hated marrying a Jew—how I hated their nasal voices, and their oriental jewelry, and their noses and their wattles."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

jectors—indeed gave as much offense to them as to the supporters of the war. It was not pacifism that inspired Bloomsbury; its objections were not to war in general but to this war. And to this war not on specific political grounds but rather on social grounds, so to speak, because of disaffection with the society and the country at large. Duncan Grant explained to his father, a major in the army, why the war seemed to him to be a crime against "civilization." He was, he confessed, "unpatriotic," as most artists were. "I began to see that one's enemies were not vague masses of foreign people, but the mass of people in one's own country and the mass of people in the enemy country, and that one's friends were people of true ideas that one might and did meet in every country one visited."

This contempt for the masses, as well as for the bourgeoisie, is dramatically illustrated in the familiar anecdote about Strachey's request to be exempted from military service. Before an audience packed with friends and relatives, Strachey slowly inflated an air cushion, carefully seated himself upon it (he claimed to have piles), and adjusted a traveling rug over his knees, before finally deigning to address himself to the questions of the tribunal. One question proved irresistible. Asked what he would do if he saw a German soldier trying to rape his sister, he solemnly looked at each of his sisters in turn and replied, in his high-pitched voice, "I should try and interpose my own body." Even if one discounts this episode as Strachey at his most outrageous, it is harder to discount the delight with which his friends received this quip, or the comment of Quentin Bell, a true son of Bloomsbury, that Strachey's attitude was "at once intelligent and irreverent."

IF THERE were fewer such episodes after the war, it was because Bloomsbury chose to *épater les bourgeois* in other ways. But the basic attitude toward public affairs persisted—a combination of irreverence, indifference, and aristocratic disdain. In 1938, about the same time that Keynes was preparing his memoir, Forster wrote an essay that perfectly captured the Bloomsbury spirit. "I do not," the essay opened, "believe in Belief." What is more, he did not regret his lack of belief; indeed he disliked and distrusted belief. His lawgivers were not Moses or St. Paul but Erasmus and Montaigne; his temple stood not on Mount Moriah but in that Elysian Field "where even the immoral are admitted"; his motto was: "Lord, I disbelieve—help thou my unbelief." But pressed for his own belief, he would oblige by invoking "personal relationships," the only good and solid thing in a world full of violence and cruelty. This was the one article of faith he could unequivocally affirm: "I certainly can proclaim that I believe in personal relationships."

It was in this essay, written after the rise of Communism and Nazism and under the shadow of war, that Forster made the much-quoted statement: "If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country." For Forster and his friends that choice did not take guts; it was only another way of asserting the primacy of "personal relationships" they had always prided themselves on and the contempt for public affairs that was really a contempt for the public. Nor did it take guts to give only "two cheers for Democracy." "Two cheers are quite enough," Forster insisted, "there is no occasion to give three. Only Love the Beloved Republic deserves that." The two cheers were for variety and criticism which were stimulated by democracy, and which, in turn, nourished the true aristocracy: "Not an aristocracy of power, based upon rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate, and the plucky." It might have been Bloomsbury Forster was alluding to when he described an aristocracy whose members have a "secret understanding when they meet," and who represent "the true human condition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos."

Forster's two cheers for democracy were not a rousing two cheers; they were more like a well-mannered "hear, hear." They were intended on the one hand as a rebuke to those who were inclined to give democracy no cheers at all—to the Communists who cared little for criticism or variety and wanted only to impose their own version of a Beloved Republic under the aegis of the party. But they were also a rebuke to those who were so misguided as to give three cheers for democracy, not realizing that the best part of democracy, its saving remnant, was the aristocracy that was not beholden to it, an aristocracy whose ultimate loyalty was to "Love the Beloved Republic," and who would betray, if need be, their country but not their friends (still less their lovers).

An earlier version of the "two cheers" theme was Forster's statement, to a congress of writers in Paris in 1935, that he was "a bourgeois who adheres to the British constitution, adheres to it rather than supports it." That lecture also suggested that Forster was not as immune from the "virus" of Communism as Keynes supposed all of Bloomsbury to be. To a group that included many Communists, Forster explained that while he himself was not a Communist, he might have been had he been "a younger and a braver man," for in Communism he could see hope; although it did many evil things, "I know that it intends good." (He went on to devote the bulk of his speech to the "Fabio-Fascism" that was menacing England, the major example of which was the censorship of a homosexual novel, *Boy*.) While Forster's tolerance for Communism disappeared in later years, his distrust of democracy did not. He was convinced that the war, however necessary, would inevitably bring totalitarianism with it. "Sensitive people," he wrote just after Munich, knew what the politicians did not, "that if fascism wins we are done for, and that we must become fascist to win."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Love the Beloved Republic"—that motto is a cruel parody of Bloomsbury. Only recently have we discovered how large a part love played among its members and what form it took. It is fitting, as Hilton Kramer has pointed out, that so much of the attention given them should focus upon their private lives rather than their work. For in spite of their enormous productivity, the fact is that (with the notable exception of Keynes and the possible exception of Virginia Woolf) their memoirs, letters, and diaries have proved more memorable than their novels, biographies, essays, and paintings. Indeed it is hard to see how they could have written and painted as much as they did in view of the enormous amount of time and effort that went into all those memoirs, letters, and diaries, to say nothing of the extraordinary amount of psychic energy that went into their complicated personal lives. (Virginia Woolf herself left five volumes of diaries and six of letters.)

If they were so absorbed with themselves—how many such groups could sustain a Memoir Club over a period of two decades?—it is little wonder that others have shared that interest. Nor is it surprising that they should be exposed to the kind of biographical scrutiny that Strachey made fashionable, and their public lives, their work, should be seen as a reflection of their private lives. Thus *Eminent Victorians* is thought to be more an expression of the personality and mentality of the author than of his ostensible subjects. And Virginia Woolf survives today less as a minor novelist than as a woman desperately seeking her sexual and psychic identity; when her novels are not being probed for feminist messages, they are being ransacked for autobiographical allusions and revelations.

It is ironic that people who prided themselves on their honesty and candor, especially in regard to their much vaunted "personal affections"—in contrast, as they thought, to Victorian hypocrisy and duplicity—should have succeeded for so long in concealing the truth about those personal affections. Even so perceptive and psychoanalytically-minded a critic as Lionel Trilling was able to write a full-length study of Forster in 1943 without realizing that he was a homosexual. Nor did Roy Harrod, in his biography of Keynes published in 1951 (the definitive biography, as it seemed at the time and as it remained for more than thirty years), see fit to mention Keynes's homosexuality—a deliberate suppression since Harrod was a friend of Keynes and was perfectly aware of his sexual proclivities and activities. Nor did Leonard Woolf, in a five-volume autobiography that was entirely candid about his wife's mental breakdowns, give any indication of the frenetic sexual affairs of everyone around him. (Woolf was perhaps the only monogamous and heterosexual one among them—and probably also celibate, since Virginia Woolf was sexually frigid, at least in relation to men.) Nor was James Strachey, Lytton's younger brother, more forthcoming; it is especially ironic that the disciple, translator, and popularizer of Freud should have forbidden access to Lytton's papers for more than thirty years after Lytton's death, and that he raised innumerable objections to the biography in which they were finally used. (He did, however, intervene to preserve Keynes's letters to Strachey when Keynes's brother threatened to destroy them.)

As late as 1968, Quentin Bell, the son of Clive and Vanessa Bell, published a book on Bloomsbury in which he admittedly "suppressed a good deal that I know and much more at which I can guess." He could hardly claim that such information would be damaging to those who were long since dead (only Leonard Woolf and Duncan Grant were then still alive). Instead he offered an explanation worthy of the most proper Victorian: "This is, primarily, a study in the history of ideas, and although the *moeurs* of Bloomsbury have to be considered and will in a general way be described, I am not required nor am I inclined to act as Clio's chambermaid, to sniff into commodes or under beds, to open love letters or to scrutinize diaries." That explanation is especially incongruous in the case of people who made an art form of letters and diaries, and who were themselves not at all averse to sniffing into commodes and under beds.

It is now apparent that what was being suppressed was not the fact of homosexuality itself; that was far too commonplace to qualify as a revelation, let alone to warrant suppression. The true revelation, which first emerged in Michael Holroyd's two-volume biography of Lytton Strachey in 1967-68 and which has since been confirmed in a host of memoirs and biographies (of which the most notable is the first volume of Robert Skidelsky's biography of Keynes published in 1983, this a truly definitive one), is the compulsive and promiscuous nature of that homosexuality. Bloomsbury itself marveled at the "permutations and combinations" of which it was capable. In 1907, for example, Strachey discovered that his lover (and cousin) Duncan Grant was also having an affair with Arthur Hobhouse, who, in turn, was having an affair with Keynes. The following year Strachey was even more distressed to learn that Grant was now having an affair with Keynes as well. He apprised Leonard Woolf, then in Ceylon, of this latest development: "Dieu! It's a mad mixture; are you shocked? We do rather permeate and combine. I've never been in love with Maynard and I've never copulated with Hobbes [Hobhouse], but at the moment, I can't think of any more exceptions." Thirty years later Keynes recalled that period as "a succession of permutations of short sharp superficial 'intrigues.'"

The wit who described Bloomsbury as a place where "all the couples were triangles and lived in squares" did not do justice to them; some more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

polygonal figure would be required to describe those "couples." Vanessa Stephen, for example, was regarded by the others as the most solid and stable of them all—"monolithic," they called her, a "solid feminine integrity," one historian has described her. In 1907 Vanessa married Clive Bell, in part, as she recognized, to console her for the loss of her beloved brother Thoby who had been Clive's friend. (She had earlier rejected Clive and agreed to marry him two days after Thoby's death.) Four years later, with the tacit acquiescence of her husband (who had been having a series of affairs, including one with Molly MacCarthy, Desmond's wife), Vanessa started an affair with Roger Fry. The *ménage à trois* had lasted two years when Roger complained to Clive that Vanessa was transferring her affections to Duncan Grant, who had suddenly (and, unhappily for Vanessa, only temporarily) acquired a taste for heterosexuality. (Duncan had earlier been her brother Adrian's lover as well as Strachey's and Keynes's.) The following year Vanessa gave birth to Angelica. Although everyone in the circle knew that Duncan was the father, the child was registered under the name of Bell and was brought up to think of him as her father. (This was partly for the benefit of Clive's parents who helped support them.)

By the time Angelica herself was married to David ("Bunny") Garnett, she knew the identity of her real father. What she did not then know was that her husband had been her father's (Duncan's) lover and had tried (for once unsuccessfully) to have an affair with her mother as well—this about the time when she was conceived. Out of pique and jealousy, Garnett had boasted, on the day of her birth, that he would marry her twenty years hence. And so he did, his timetable off by two years because he had to wait for the death of his wife. He had started his affair with Angelica, however, some two years earlier, and he even managed to make his first sexual overtures to her in a car, with Duncan in the back seat and in sight of his invalid wife who sat watching for their arrival from her window. Although Duncan and Vanessa were somewhat disturbed by the thought of the marriage of their daughter to their old friend, they were not sufficiently so to try seriously to prevent it; they were far more disturbed by not being invited to the wedding.

"THE world is damned queer—it really is. But people won't recognize the immensity of its queerness." We are only now beginning to recognize how "queer" that world was—not only homosexual but bisexual, androgynous, near-incestuous, and polymorphously promiscuous. If the biographer or historian of Bloomsbury is obliged to take this seriously, it is because his characters did, because they made a morality (or "religion," as Keynes put it) of "personal affections" as well as of "aesthetic enjoyments." Indeed the two were of a piece, the "new dispensation" inaugurating an ethic of "modernism," so to speak, together with the aesthetic of modernism.

The "Higher Sodomy," as they called it, seemed to them to be not only a higher form of sexuality; it was a higher form of morality. In sex as in art they were autonomous and self-contained, free to experiment and express themselves without inhibition or guilt. That sense of autonomy and liberation, the cultivation of states of consciousness and feeling, the exaltation of the self and the denigration of society, the emphasis upon immediate gratification, all contributed to the narcissism and egoism, the perversity and promiscuity that Keynes himself recognized to be a form of immorality. If this was a vulgarization of Moore, it was one to which Moore was susceptible and which Bloomsbury exploited. Strachey once explained to Keynes the difficulty of converting the world to "Moorism":

> Our great stumbling-block in the business of introducing the world to Moorism is our horror of half-measures. We can't be content with telling the truth—we must tell the whole truth; and the whole truth is the Devil. Voltaire abolished Christianity by believing in god. It's madness of us to dream of making dowagers understand that feelings are good, when we say in the same breath that the best ones are sodomitical.

They had, in fact, too much contempt for the "dowagers" of this world to try to convert them. Instead they themselves chose to live with that "whole truth."

Perhaps in a hundred years, Strachey speculated, when their letters were finally published, everyone would be converted. Now that those letters, and so much else as well, are being published, we can begin to take the measure of their "truth."* We can also, finally, begin to discard the myths that they circulated about themselves and that have been perpetuated by their admirers. These myths have a long history and come to us on good authority: from Leonard Woolf before World War I proclaiming Bloomsbury "the builders of a new society which should be free, rational, civilized"; to Virginia Woolf a decade later assuring a friend that Bloomsbury's view of life was by no means "corrupt or sinister or merely intellectual" but rather "ascetic and austere indeed"; to Forster in the midst of World War II commemorating Strachey for his "wit and aristocratic good man-

* Virginia Woolf's letters and diaries make especially painful reading. Clever, perceptive, often scintillating, they are also unremittingly snobbish (her contempt for the middle classes was matched only by her disgust with the working classes), anti-Semitic, malicious, and even cruel (toward servants, most notably). Moreover, these traits spill over into her literary judgments, as in her comments on Joyce's *Ulysses*: "An illiterate, underbred book it seems to me; the book of a self-taught working man, and we all know how distressing they are, how egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, and ultimately nauseating." Her husband, who rarely permitted any sexual comments to appear in his edition of extracts from her diaries, evidently thought there was nothing objectionable in this entry.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ners," his implacable "pursuit of truth," his belief in "fidelity between human beings" and "constant affection"; to Quentin Bell praising his parents' generation for seeking "a life of rational and pacific freedom," of "reason, charity, and good sense"; to the historian, J. K. Johnstone, describing Bloomsbury's mission as carrying forward "the highest and most spiritual ideas of the past into a century which has paid scant attention to the things of the spirit"; to the distinguished biographer, Leon Edel, who takes his title, *A House of Lions*, from Virginia's comparison of Bloomsbury with the lions' house at the zoo where "all the animals are dangerous, rather suspicious of each other, and full of fascination and mystery," and who transforms that lions' house into an eminently "humanistic world," where they were all bound together by a chain of love and sex happily freed of "Victorian guilt and shame"; to all the others who continue to pay tribute to the brave new world of Bloomsbury, a world devoted to beauty, truth, and love.

AGAINST that view the few dissenting voices have seemed churlish and priggish. Keynes's memoir had been provoked by an earlier paper by David Garnett recalling the bitter hostility of D. H. Lawrence to the Cambridge-Bloomsbury group. Garnett quoted a letter Lawrence had written him in 1915:

> To hear these young people talk really fills me with black fury: they talk endlessly, but endlessly—and never, never a good thing said. They are cased each in a hard little shell of his own and out of this they talk words. There is never for one second any outgoing of feeling and no reverence, not a crumb or grain of reverence. I cannot stand it. I will not have people like this —I had rather be alone. They made me dream of a beetle that bites like a scorpion. But I killed it—a very large beetle. I scotched it and it ran off—but I came on it again, and killed it. It is this horror of little swarming selves I can't stand.

To Garnett the issue was simple: Lawrence was jealous of Garnett's friends and vexed by a rationalism so at odds with his own penchant for intuition and instinct. Keynes took a more complicated view of it, seeing Lawrence as simultaneously repelled and attracted by a "civilization" that was alien to him. But Keynes, while affirming his own commitment to that civilization, went on to admit that there was some justice in Lawrence's attack. Bloomsbury's civilization, he said, was a thin veneer beneath which seethed the reality of "vulgar passion"; its rationalism was a disguise for cynicism, and its irreverence and libertinism were a form of "intellectual *chic*."

Reviewing Keynes's memoir after its posthumous publication, F. R. Leavis saw it as an unwitting confirmation of Lawrence's views. Even at that late stage of his life, Leavis found, Keynes still did not appreciate the full enormity of the "Cambridge-Bloomsbury ethos." He still took it seriously, not realizing that its gravest flaw was that it was "inimical to the development of any real seriousness." What looked like articulateness and sophistication was callowness, conceit, and complacency, an acute case of arrested development and undergraduate immaturity. In place of Lawrence's image of a large, hideous beetle, Leavis invoked what he took to be its equivalent: the figure of Lytton Strachey. "Let it be remembered that the 'civilization' celebrated by Keynes produced Lytton Strachey, and that the literary world dominated by that 'civilization' made Lytton Strachey a living Master and a prevailing influence." And then, as if to point up still more the heinousness of that fact, he asked: "Can we imagine Sidgwick or Leslie Stephen or Maitland being influenced by, or interested in, the equivalent of Lytton Strachey? By what steps, and by the operation of what causes, did so great a change come over Cambridge in so comparatively short a time?"

Leavis wrote that review long before Holroyd's biography of Strachey gave us the full measure of the man, and before a host of other biographies and autobiographies gave us the full measure of Bloomsbury. We can now appreciate that Strachey was not an anomaly in Bloomsbury but was, as Leavis implied, its essence. And we can also appreciate the contrast between the generation of Strachey and that of his elders—those late Victorians whom Strachey, and Bloomsbury, so mercilessly derided.

We may also better appreciate the force of Nietzsche's warning: that the late Victorian Englishmen for whom "morality is not yet a problem" would give way to a post-Victorian generation for whom morality would be not only problematic but nonexistent. For what Nietzsche saw, and what Leavis did not, was the precariousness of that late Victorian morality, a morality that was all the more admirable, perhaps, because it tried to maintain itself without the sanctions and consolations of religion, but that was too impoverished, too far removed from its original inspiration, to transmit itself to the next generation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Few Home Truths About Latin America

Luis Burstin

American friend: We Americans seem to be growing very interested in Latin America these days.

Burstin: I have to disagree with you. There is certainly a great deal of what resembles interest, but it isn't really that at all. In the past, the amount of writing about Latin America, say in the American press, was negligible, except when we had a good revolution or an outstanding earthquake. Of course, you had a few dozen academics, some quite respectable, who were your Latin American specialists, but some of them had either a patronizing outlook or they wrote books which were mainly catalogues of the mistakes committed by the United States and of the atrocities committed by Latin Americans, or vice versa, or both. What has really existed among you, basically, is an anthropological curiosity about our backwardness and our bizarre history. As for the current outpouring of books, essays, articles, and news stories about Central America, it reflects not an authentic intellectual or political interest, but perplexity spiced with pious worries and guilt feelings.

A: Could you be more specific about those "worries and guilt feelings"?

B: In the United States, at least in a sector of your academic and political classes, you seem to be experiencing, first, the feeling that perhaps you should have paid attention to us in the past, that it is this lack of interest which is now producing our convolutions; and, second—this is more common among liberal and leftist intellectuals—there is the belief that the poverty and the social and political nightmares of Latin America have been produced by the United States, by the exploitation of our countries by American corporations, and the intervention in our internal affairs of the United States government and politicians. So there are two distinctive kinds of guilt associated with this perplexity. Which one do you suffer from?

A: Probably both, but especially the first. I admit that I do think that if we had taken notice in the past of these strange realities south of the border, we might have avoided what we have now, maybe even the perplexity.

B: Before I tell you why I disagree again, let me tell you that my credentials in this matter are good. I have been writing for many years, always complaining, about the indifference of the United States toward some real democratic options in Latin America. These democratic options almost always seemed improbable or risky to the people in Washington. Of course, there was more to it than that, but if you look carefully at the whole picture, you will perhaps find, if not a justification, at least an explanation of your indifference to us. In the last ten years I have been asking my friends and my students: tell me, why should the United States—or Europe—have been interested in Latin America? Why do you think we are so interesting? Sure, we have in Latin America enormous individual talents, as with any other human conglomerate. But as a civilization, as an ensemble of societies, what have we shown to the world? What is so interesting about poverty, scientific and technical backwardness, illiterate and undernourished masses, cultural inanition, and political brutality? Some of our writers and artists—who have, precisely, described this horrible backwardness of Latin America—were once right in complaining about indifference by the rest of the world, but that is no longer so: Latin American art has been granted world recognition. As for our other somber realities, they could perhaps elicit compassion in a modern man—but interest? Why?

A: Don't you think that poverty itself can be of great intellectual interest?

B: To the anthropologists who have studied the cultural characteristics of poverty, yes. But not everybody is Claude Lévi-Strauss. In themselves

LUIS BURSTIN, who practices medicine in San José, Costa Rica, has also been the editor of a newspaper there, a television commentator, and Secretary of Information from 1974 to 1978. Here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, he has previously published articles in the New York *Times* and the *New Republic*. The present article is drawn from a book on which he is working entitled *An Introduction to Latin American Political Mythology*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

poverty, backwardness, and political brutality are not really interesting. Mass poverty needs no explanation; it is the "natural" state of society. As thinkers from Adam Smith to Karl Marx have recognized, what needs explanation is wealth, that is, how different societies have been able to overcome the natural state of poverty. From there you can try to explain why so many societies, having had a chance, failed. The same thing is true of political backwardness. It may be of interest to students of political history, but in itself it too is quite boring. The Latin American variant of it, *caudillismo*, has been extensively researched, and it has been found to be the only original Latin American contribution to the world of political ideas. Brutal societies, like the ones we have around here, only become truly interesting when the Russians enter the picture. But that is a different story.

A: Tell me.

B: Well, why have some American politicians discovered, all of a sudden, that there is a social and political hell down here? And "here" means next to the United States, not on Saturn, in which case you would have needed NASA to discover it. When a transformation like this happens, you should either *cherchez la politique*, that is American presidential politics, or *cherchez* the Russians; in this case, you would do well to *cherchez* both. I cannot believe that hundreds of American politicians, writers, editors, and policy-makers in the past did not know what was going on south of the Rio Grande. They looked but they did not see; they listened but they did not hear. This immense world of political criminality, these hundreds of thousands of people being killed, tortured, or starved to death, all this Dantesque reality was known, but nobody cared.

What then suddenly gave everyone eyes to see and ears to hear? You can find the answer in today's newspapers. See here, on the front page: "Fleet of Soviet Warships Sails in the Caribbean." It took the Russians a while to come here, but finally they came. They tried for the first time in the early 30's, when they sent Farabundo Martí to organize a Communist takeover in El Salvador and failed, but finally they are here, in the Caribbean, the *Mare Americanum*.

And it also took a while for us, Latin American democrats, to be noticed and listened to: it took the establishment of a Communist regime in Cuba and the spread of Marxism-Leninism throughout Central America for Americans to learn that political indifference may have an explanation but it also has a price. Now, with the Russians, the Cubans, and an assorted bunch of "people's liberators" riding high in Central America, everybody seems acutely worried about our social and economic backwardness, about our political brutality.

For this Fidel Castro and his Soviet backers have to be thanked.

A: What about the other guilt feelings—those originating from the belief that the poverty and the social and political nightmares of Latin America have been produced by the United States?

B: This belief is at the heart of everything that is happening here. All the revolutionary groups in Latin America base their political action on the premise that poverty, chaos, and dictatorships—all, as you know, endemic phenomena around here for many centuries now, even before the United States emerged as a unified country—have their origin in the exploitation of our countries by the United States and in the interventionism and colonialism of the United States in Latin America. This premise, which does not have to be proved but only accepted, not only finds stimulus in some academic and left-wing political circles in the United States; it also gets joyful and enthusiastic support from many political leaders of the Third World, as well as most of the social-democratic and democratic-socialist political parties of Europe.

A: I have to admit that I myself have begun to believe that the United States is responsible for many of your troubles.

B: But also, somehow, I suspect that you have never been quite convinced of your convictions. Down deep, I am pretty sure, you know that this idea—the idea that the United States is the cause of our backwardness, and that the prosperity of the United States rests on plunder—does not fit with reality. But you don't dare to say so because you would then be called a conservative or even, God forbid, a reactionary.

A: Instead of talking about me, why don't we go on talking about the issues? For instance, I always thought that this American idea of responsibility for your troubles was the exclusive property of the Left, but I gather that you think it also involves the Right and sometimes even the democratic Center.

B: Yes, although not many on the Right or in the democratic Center express it explicitly. You see, thousands of tons of printed paper and thousands of hours of radio and television—not to mention the uninterrupted sequence of seminars on "dependence and underdevelopment"—tell our citizens daily, persistently, and unequivocally: *we are poor because the United States is rich; the United States is rich because it exploits us; let's fight against the United States.* As simple as that. And the message goes on: we live in chaos and under dictatorships because the United States intervenes in our countries; the support that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

United States has traditionally given to our dictators proves this; American corporations are the godfathers of all the brutality and the killings that for decades the Latin American dictators, their puppets, have perpetrated. All we have to do is fight against the United States and all this will come to an end. And the implicit assertions are equally important: if the United States hadn't intervened in our countries, Latin America would not only have developed economically but we would also be enjoying perfect social justice and pure Jeffersonian democracy.

A: Do they really go *that* far?

B: What do you mean "really"? Listen to this example. On March 5, 1981, one of our foremost novelists, the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes, who is a leftist but certainly not a Communist, wrote in the New York *Times*: "Is not this the other fundamental reason, along with colonialism, of turmoil, instability, terrorism, hunger, and weakness in the area: United States interventionism, always, only, United States interventionism?" So now you can see what your interventionism has produced in our countries: *turmoil*, something we never knew before the United States started messing up things down here; *instability*, which of course is also completely alien to our tradition of centuries-old stable governments; then you have also provoked in our peaceful societies *terrorism*, which the Montoneros, the Tupamaros, the Sendero Luminosos, and our native fascist gangs had to learn from American textbooks provided by the CIA; and as if all that weren't enough, add to the list *hunger*, a completely new social catastrophe in Latin America, because, as is universally known, for centuries we were such big producers of agricultural products that for the last two hundred years one of our main public-health problems has been the prevalence of obesity among our peasants; not only that, but worse, because, as is also universally accepted, our land had been fairly distributed among our obese farmers, who always used advanced agricultural techniques until the United States brought all this to an abrupt end by taking away our techniques and fertilizers and then reorganizing things in such a way that a few landlords ended up with all the land and began paying those miserable wages of a few cents and two tortillas a day; and, of course, *weakness*, a sad situation because we still remember the old times when we were strong and progressive countries, an example for all humanity to follow.

A: An impressive list of accomplishments for the United States, isn't it?

B: Yes, but it is still not complete. Carlos Fuentes forgot to mention *corruption*, I don't know why.

A: If this is what is said by a left-wing but non-Communist Latin American intellectual, what do the Communists have to say about the role of the United States?

B: From a theoretical point of view they seem to disagree strongly, because the Communists will say that if we fight American imperialism and support the Soviet Union everything around here will be bright and beautiful, while the non-Communists will argue against Soviet "imperialism" and attack both superpowers at the same time. So they present a picture of neutrality and independence. But objectively, as the Marxists say, the attack of the non-Communists on the United States is quite similar to, frequently identical with, the argument of the Communists, which is why they often come together in the fight "against imperialism and for national liberation." For some strange reason, wherever a political movement like that happens to be successful in Latin America, the people who are not independent, the Marxist-Leninists, always happen to get control of the whole thing; they align themselves with Moscow, and, after a while, you begin to see the old independent anti-imperialist fighters claiming that they were betrayed, and there we go again. (By some strange coincidence, too, all of them are strongly anti-Israel but say they love Jews.)

The argument against my analysis is that it is precisely what the reactionaries and pro-imperialists say when they try to delegitimate the struggles for national independence by classifying them as "Communist" and, by doing so, to justify all the mistakes and abuses of the United States in our countries. I know this argument well, because when I belonged to the Left in Costa Rica, we knew how to manipulate the independent intellectuals and, believe me, willingly or not, they *were* manipulated. There is not one example in Latin America in which the "nationalistic, patriotic, and independent" forces did not find strong and indisputable reasons of one kind or another to enter into a frank or furtive alliance with the Soviet Union, most of the time because of a "lack of understanding" by the United States.

So the premise that the United States is responsible for the hunger, the instability, and the brutality in our countries unites well-meaning American leftists, independent anti-imperialistic Latin American intellectuals and politicians, and hard-core Marxist-Leninists. And when this assorted group gets together and is really able to get somewhere, by some strange repetitive coincidence, the Marxist-Leninists always turn out to be the major shareholders of the whole business.

A: Does all this go back a long way in Latin American history?

B: No. It is a relatively new political phenomenon. In the last century, for example, our greatest thinkers and politicians—men like Simón Bolivar

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Benito Juarez—not only were great admirers of the United States but also wanted to emulate its example.

A: So things have changed a lot.

B: Yes; instead of old-fashioned liberal democrats, we now have these professional blamers. They should be forced to read the writings of P.T. Bauer. So should everyone else. You may not agree with him about everything, but how are you going to deny the overwhelming facts he puts before you? If colonialism were the original cause of our backwardness—and, along this line of thought, also of that of Africa and Asia—why is it that the so-called Fourth World, the least-developed countries of the Third World such as Afghanistan, Chad, Bhutan, Burundi, Nepal, and Sikkim, did not until very recently have any external economic contacts, and how is it that most of them were never Western colonies?

Listen to this lucid and luminous paragraph of Bauer's:

> About ten years ago a student group at Cambridge published a pamphlet on the subject of the moral obligations of the West to the Third World. The following was its key passage: "We took the rubber from Malaya, the tea from India, raw materials from all over the world and gave almost nothing in return." This is as nearly the opposite of truth as one can find. The British took the rubber *to* Malaya and the tea *to* India. There were no rubber trees in Malaya or anywhere in Asia (as suggested by their botanical name, *Hevea braziliensis*) until about one hundred years ago, when the British took the first rubber seeds there out of the Amazon jungle. From these sprang the huge rubber industry—now very largely Asian-owned. Tea plants were brought to India by the British somewhat earlier; their origin is shown in the botanical name *Camilla sinensis*, as well as in the phrase "all the tea in China."

You can make the same case for bananas that you can for rubber in Malaya, and get a standing ovation down here by shouting that the bananas are being taken away from us by the *yanquis*. Nobody will interrupt you to say that bananas were brought *to* our countries by foreign companies, and that if we didn't have bananas in the areas where they are planted, we probably would have nothing there.

A: The other argument which is used within this context is that the dependency of your countries has not exactly produced the backwardness—the backwardness was there—but the dependency has prevented your countries from developing and has perpetuated that backwardness.

B: Well, as Jean-François Revel has cleverly asked, why is it that here, in our hemisphere, the dependency of Latin America on the United States has produced backwardness, while in Canada, which is a country "dependent" on the United States to a degree that has no equal in the world, this relationship has produced not backwardness but a modern, progressive, and rich country? Or take Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea, poor and backward countries three decades ago but now among the most prosperous and vital in the world. They were invaded by foreign capital and technology; they became dependent on Western "imperialism" and markets; and yet in just three decades they left all their backwardness behind and are now jumping into the era of the highest technology. So there they are, working hard and studying hard and inventing things, and bringing in foreign capital, and becoming dependent and all that; and here we are, poor, rancorous, and blaming others for our social brutality and historical evils.

A: Let me go back to my first question. You denied there was a lot of real interest in Latin America, but you can't deny that there is a lot of writing being done. Have you read much of it?

B: Yes, though it is almost impossible to cope with the rate of production. And now that several European writers have also discovered Latin America, it has became an avalanche. But I do my best.

A: I wonder how a Latin American like you reacts to this avalanche.

B: Well, sometimes it is interesting, sometimes it is funny, sometimes it is quite boring. Some of these books are travel diaries disguised as political analysis: "I want you to know that I had the courage to go down there, my life was in danger several times, more frequently from the food than from the guerrillas, but I survived the food, the guerrillas, *and* the government, and before I write my book I want to tell you that the whole thing stinks."

Then there are books presented as "human" documents and composed of recollections of superficial conversations with some of our political leaders, together with conversations with "independent" leftist intellectuals—the more anti-American the better—as well as some guerrilla leaders who hate American companies but who always like *gringos* very much "as people," and a few barefoot *campesinos* who, by a strange coincidence, always happen to think the same way about everything as the writer thought up there in the United States before his trip down here. This type of book says in effect: "I went there and I found a lot of interesting and curious people, characters who, believe me, you don't see on Park Avenue, and I strongly believe that we have neglected these people for a long time and that we don't understand them; we don't understand what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is going on down there because the situation is quite complicated, so I strongly believe we should do something immediately and quite different from what we have been doing up to now; I must confess that I don't really know what we have been doing up to now, but above all let's remember the lessons of Vietnam. . . ."

Then there is another general category, the books or essays which are really a summary of daily newspaper stories presented as well-informed and deep thinking, and which generally end up with the proposal that "We Americans should go away and ask the Cubans and the Russians to go away, too." To which I am always tempted to add that perhaps we Central Americans should also go away.

What still other people say, but only implicitly of course, is: "Those people down there have no way out, so let them have their revolutions in peace, let them kill each other as they please, we can't do anything about it anyhow, and it is not our responsibility; if the Russians want to go in, let the Russians have their Vietnam down there; as for me, I'll stay in Southern California." Or: "Well, those guys in Central America have a terrible situation; on the one hand, this, and on the other hand, that, so, let's wait and see. . . ."

Last year, I also read some very outstanding people, people I personally admire and respect, including Robert W. Tucker, who, I don't know why, decided to support the idea of "power-sharing" in El Salvador. Until reading them, I was acquainted with the following Marxist-Leninist ways to seize power: (1) storm the Winter Palace; (2) send in the Red Army and establish "peoples' democracies"; (3) make a long march, beat the other side in a civil war, and form a government; (4) throw the President of the country out of the window; (5) participate within a broad coalition in a popular upheaval against a dictator and once the dictator has fled, expel your old partners from the country or throw them into jail; (6) go to the mountains, fight a guerrilla war in the name of democracy, and throw out the dictator; then, when you are in power, announce that you are a Marxist-Leninist.

Those are the classical ways. Now some American political analysts have added another one: "Organize a guerrilla movement even if you cannot win, but make sure the government cannot defeat you for a certain period of time; then propose 'power-sharing,' and enter the government without having won an election, without the help of the Red Army, without even having won the guerrilla war."

A: What about the Europeans?

B: One contemporary European writer I greatly admire is Guenter Grass. Well, he went to Nicaragua. In the February 1984 issue of the *Atlantic*, Mario Vargas Llosa, the renowned Peruvian novelist and a friend of mine, wrote an article strongly protesting what he called the "media stereotypes" of Latin America, and criticizing Guenter Grass for exhorting the Latin Americans to follow the "Cuban example."

Grass, in a letter to the *Atlantic*, denied that he was recommending a Soviet-influenced solution: "Actually, I have been saying repeatedly that if Latin America can rely on Western Europe for help, it will no longer need to turn to the Soviet Union. Cuba, too, would have taken a different course, had it not been isolated and at the mercy of Soviet interests." Grass concluded his letter by saying:

> Nicaragua needs time and peace in order to preserve and develop its newly won freedom from Somoza's dictatorship. Such development requires that the United States government cease destabilizing this small country and be prepared, together with the governments of Western Europe, to give needed economic and development aid. This is the only way that the exercise of influence by the Soviet Union (like that which occurred in Cuba) can be prevented.

Mario Vargas Llosa replied that he had read some newspaper reports according to which Grass was proposing the "Cuban example" for Latin America, but he was now glad to learn that Grass was really not proposing anything of that sort. Well, I haven't read the reports mentioned by Vargas Llosa, but I have read an epilogue written by Grass to a book entitled *Trouble in Our Backyard*, edited by Martin Diskin. Let me just quote a few passages:

> I went there [to Nicaragua] with only superficial impressions, but I returned with vastly different perceptions. . . . I had no idea how similar the Polish trade-union movement, Solidarity, and the Nicaraguan Sandinistas actually are, or how the persistent and defiant dependence of Poland on the Soviet Union is mirrored by that of Central America—in particular Nicaragua—on the United States.

Then he continues with this same argument: "Even skeptics have to admit that Rosa Luxemburg appeared in Poland in the guise of the Virgin Mary and that in Nicaragua the Mother of God has the look of Rosa Luxemburg."

Grass goes on to say that the United States is ready for a new Vietnam in Central America, and than he says:

> I knew all that before the trip, but it was not until I arrived in Nicaragua that I was to feel so ashamed of those that I, a German, have to be allied with [that is you, the Americans, in case you don't get it]. As far as it is possible for an individual, I hereby wish to terminate this association for the following reasons: because for a long time it has not fulfilled its obligation to protect Western democracies; because its members are required to be silent and tolerant of the crimes of their superpower ally, in order not to weaken the alliance. . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Etc. Then he says: "This renewed Christian confidence is spreading across Latin America, and even in Cuba, where the revolution is thought to have been completed and is itself a model for Nicaragua. . . ." And then near the end, he says: "Nicaragua needs help. It is trying to develop its agriculture, which in a few years will produce surpluses (maize and beans), and so will help meet the growing worldwide hunger problem. . . ."

A: When was this essay written?

B: In 1983. So I can understand Mario Vargas Llosa's anger. Does Guenter Grass know that in the eighteen months following the 1979 Nicaraguan revolution the country that gave the most financial support to the Sandinista government was the United States, and that this aid continued even after the Sandinista junta had begun to renege on its promise to create a pluralistic society? Does he know that American aid to Nicaragua during those eighteen months far exceeded the total U.S. aid to Somoza over the previous twenty years? So how can he say that it was U.S. interference, or lack of economic aid, that drove the Sandinistas to link up with Fidel Castro and with the rest of the Communist world and also the Libyans and the PLO? I can only tell you that from my own discussions with Cuban leaders, and from what I know that they know that I know, and reading again what Grass writes, I can hear from here the horselaughs of the Cubans.

A: In general, though, what are your feelings about the writings of the European intellectuals?

B: With very few exceptions, they are patronizing. Quite a few of them, who are unhappy with industrial capitalism, know, if they are not illiterate, that the only way to change it radically in the direction they want is by a dictatorship; they don't like reformism, which they consider to be a trick of "the system" to perpetuate itself. But they don't dare to propose a "class dictatorship," that is, a dictatorship of the party, as Lenin did. So they feel quite frustrated. You know that all the rhetoric about "democratic processes" and "working within the system" is pietistic chitchat. There is no way to collectivize an economy *quickly* without terror, repression, and dictatorship. Whenever you hear somebody saying that he wants to "transform the social structure" in order to achieve "a change in the ownership of the means of production" while preserving individual freedom, political pluralism, and all the other "bourgeois" democratic institutions, either he is stupid or he thinks you are stupid. To achieve Lenin's goals you need Lenin's methods. If they say to you that they don't like Lenin's goals, and they don't like social-democratic goals, and they don't like liberal-capitalist goals, then, again, either they are stupid or they think you are stupid. So, in this respect, only the real Marxist-Leninists, who belong to an international movement without which nothing they want is possible, *do* know exactly what they are after and how to achieve it. The rest are the discardable circus.

Well, many of those European intellectuals are unhappy with their brand of democratic socialism, but they don't dare propose Leninist methods to achieve what they want. Here, in Central America, they have found a place where they can air their grievances against industrial capitalism and where, especially, they can smear the United States, and, of course, and this is very important, they can accept *here* methods which they would never say are good for *their* countries.

Not long ago I had a discussion on television with some European journalists who argued that in Central America there was no tradition of democracy, in the "bourgeois" sense of the word, and that our peoples were not used to political freedom, so there was no sense in talking about that here. In other words, we only have a choice between a dictatorship of the Right and a dictatorship of the Left (which would at least "improve our social conditions"), and democracy is a luxury we can afford to live without. There were two well-known German journalists in the group, so I asked them whether they thought that Germany and Japan had a longer democratic tradition than Nicaragua, or Colombia, or Chile.

You see, that is the problem: it is so easy to find historical justifications and sociological reasons for the imposition of non-democratic systems on *other* people, based generally on their lack of democratic traditions, or their poverty, or both. It is only we, who live here, who don't agree with that overseas sophistication. Maybe we don't have any democratic traditions, but we don't like to live under dictatorship either.

Besides, we *do* have democratic forces in our region. *This* is a real and fundamental turnaround of the whole perspective, as much for you as for us. The United States has been finding out, in the last few years, that military dictatorships may *look* like the only reliable stabilizing force in the area, but when the real shooting and fighting starts, they tend to disintegrate and collapse, as happened in Cuba with Batista, in Nicaragua with Somoza, and, for different reasons, in Argentina with the military junta.

So now you are finding out that our democratic leaders in Latin America, who happened to have been here for all of our recent history, are, after all, not only the legitimate friends of the United States from the political and moral point of view, but also the best political alternative. A pity you couldn't help find one for Nicaragua during Somoza's time, as you did in the Dominican Republic when Trujillo died.

A: All this writing, all this activity, all this confusion—is it really new for a man like you?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

B: No, not at all. In fact, this new wisdom of American and European intellectuals and writers that finds the United States responsible for all our evils, and the proposition that Marxist revolutions are not only inevitable but desirable, and that those revolutions are the only way out for our countries—meaning that fighting the United States is the key to freedom, well-being, economic development, and social justice—all that was the standard intellectual and political diet we fed ourselves thirty years ago. Of course, in a good proportion of cases all this was not only an academic exercise, but it led to militancy of all sorts, including Soviet-oriented Communist parties, Maoist groups, Trotskyists, terrorist associations, and independent self-appointed demolishers of the establishment.

A: You yourself were, as you mentioned earlier, one of the intoxicated.

B: Yes, and to a considerable degree, almost to the point of no return; because in this, as in almost everything else, there is a point of no return, there are dangerous one-way trips. But I was lucky. It was one of the most interesting stages in my life, a fundamental one, which taught me, among other things, never to judge the world from the most dangerous place you can judge it—that is, sitting at your desk in a faraway country concocting profound social analyses about the "natives," and delivering political prescriptions whose consequences will anyway never affect you personally.

A: But in what way were you lucky?

B: You have to be lucky to catch the disease at the proper time in life. If not, you are lost. One of my friends, who together with me passed through the adolescent leftist jungle, pointed out recently that if you become a leftist after forty, the disease becomes not only incurable but ridiculous. The difference, at least in Latin America, is that when you catch the revolutionary virus at the age of seventeen, you are stimulated by it, and it produces a certain intellectual excitement and vitality. You also have a chance to develop the intellectual defenses that eliminate the disease and leave you strong enough to reject almost any subsequent recurrence. Then you become completely immune to any totalitarian temptation. For that, you have to get sick when young, and you have to have enough strength of character after you recover to survive the avalanche of attacks and insults that will come crashing down on you. The collection of insults I have personally been graced with by the Communist press in Costa Rica in the last twenty years is really notable. So if somebody should call them agents of the empire of evil, we would not be even close to getting even in the interchange of insults.

A: Now that you have recovered from the disease and acquired your immunity, what are some of the things you have learned?

B: I have already told you about some of them. Here is another and one of the most important: revolutions are not caused by poverty and social injustice. Until a few years ago, poverty and social injustice in Central America were regarded by almost everybody as part of the landscape. Now, there is almost no one who does not affirm that poverty and social injustice are the causes of our tumult. Yet history gives no solid evidence for such an assertion. If the direct cause of the violence in Latin America were social injustice, El Salvador and Guatemala would hardly be the only countries where guerrillas threaten the government. We can all think of several other Latin American nations with masses of poor people—countries that, according to the myth, should be excellent candidates for revolution. But you see, in those Latin American countries where a more or less cyclical mechanism permits the exercise of power to pass regularly from one ruling group to another, the possibilities of revolution diminish markedly—despite persisting poverty and social injustice. No. Neither Fidel nor the Sandinistas came to power because the Cuban *guajiro* or the Nicaraguan *campesino* was chronically poor.

A: So how did they come to power?

B: Let me try to answer that by looking at an exemplary Latin American revolutionary, Che Guevara. If you say to somebody that Guevara was an innocuous revolutionary, he will laugh in your face. After all, when Guevara was with Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra, he showed his bravery and imagination, and, afterward, when they were in power, he was a key to the radicalization of the Cuban revolution. But Guevara also fought to keep the official Communist party of Cuba from taking over leadership of the revolution. If he had prevailed, the Cuban revolution would never have been able to consolidate itself. In fact, it was not until the orthodox Communist party of Cuba was taken in as a fundamental part of the revolutionary process that Fidel Castro could really say he had a chance for survival. Of course, what he took in was not *exactly* the Communist party of Cuba, whose membership was tiny, but what the Communist party of Cuba represented internationally, that is, mainly the Soviet Union. Once the Marxist-Leninists of Cuba, who had incidentally opposed Fidel's "adventurism" all during his stay in the Sierra Maestra, were pulled in, the lifeline with the Soviet Union was connected, and *the real thing* began.

A: But Che Guevara then started a new line of political action, trying to spread the Cuban revo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lution abroad and trying to transform the Andes into a "gigantic Vietnam," as he used to say.

B: Yes, of course, and this proves further what I have been saying. After the Cuban revolution had more or less consolidated itself, Guevara either became bored with it or decided that without a revolution throughout Latin America the Cubans would always be in danger. By then, a great fear had spread all over Latin America: the Cuban menace, the specter of revolution. But it all failed to materialize. And why? I have a complete file of the insults and attacks Che Guevara was subjected to by the Communist parties in Latin America before he was finally defeated and shot in the Bolivian jungle. Without the full support, at the crucial moment, of the Soviet Union, this exemplary Latin American revolutionary was rendered impotent.

A: So you are saying that the old-fashioned Communist parties are the only effective revolutionary force in Latin America. Yet they seem to be so dormant and numerically weak.

B: Without them, and without what is *behind* them, Fidel Castro wouldn't be where he is today. And because they were not really there for Allende in Chile, Allende is no longer where he was. The Communists in Chile knew perfectly well what was going on and what was going to happen. A year before Allende's election, one of the most prominent leaders of the Chilean Communist party told me that they were quite dubious about the political wisdom of winning the next elections with Allende as their candidate, because they felt that there were no "objective" conditions for a Marxist revolution and a socialization of Chile. What he really meant was that the Soviet Union was not going to duplicate in Chile its involvement with Cuba, including, of course, the vital economic subsidy.

You see, the Communist parties attached to Moscow have always been accused by their more radical leftist competitors of being reformist, bourgeois, and ineffective. They are not. They are the only really effective revolutionary force in Latin America. The other groups and individuals are usefully noisy and belligerent, and they can sometimes overthrow a dictator like Batista or Somoza. But they are not capable of delivering the knockout blow, the blow that consolidates the process, that makes for *the real thing*. It is only when the Moscow-attached Communists and their sponsors come onto the stage that the real performance begins. And once it begins, the hope of democracy ends, and we who live down here not only have to suffer a new form of political oppression, which is bad enough, but we also have to suffer the arguments of our "friends" in the United States and Europe who tell us that we have no democratic tradition anyway and at least a dictatorship of the Left will "improve our social conditions."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kosher Ecology

Newtol Press

I

Apologists for religion often draw on science to reinforce their views, but their elaborate arguments cut no ice with scientists. Believe what you will, a scientist would say, you cannot prove the truth of religion by scientific tests. And in fact most religious people (as opposed to apologists for religion) do not bother with science. Religious ordinances are observed by them not because they are scientifically valid, but as matters of faith. If observant Jews (and Muslims) avoid eating the flesh of swine, it is not out of fear of trichinosis. If Jews do not boil meat in milk, it is not because they happen to know that some disease-causing bacteria, coated by milk during digestion, might make them ill. They follow these hygienic practices for reasons of faith, performing the dictates of a higher wisdom beyond the ken of mortals.

This is hardly to say that religious ordinances lack an appeal to reason. Those that exercise such an appeal, however, are for the most part clustered in the area of social ethics. The scriptural rules that make the greatest "sense" concern interpersonal relations: rules that encourage us to act in such a way as to strengthen social structures, or that discourage us from enfeebling society. In being kind to foreigners, in applying to them the same laws by which we ourselves live, we unify the fabric of our own institutions; honesty in commerce enables us to conduct business in an atmosphere of trust, and more easily than we could in a hostile climate. Societies are, after all, such improbably fragile structures that they can be held together only by rigid skeletons of laws; incest, murder, and theft are reasonably prohibited in all surviving cultures.

Children who are taught to be kind to animals are often surprised to find that kindness to animals is not listed among the Ten Commandments. We are told to help an animal struggling to carry a heavy load (Exodus 23:5), an injunction that could be a matter of utility as much as of kindness. We are also told not to sacrifice a kid and its mother together (Leviticus 22:28), and not to boil a kid in its mother's milk (Exodus 23:19). The effect these rules have on dead goats is clearly negligible, but their effect on people is at once subtle and profound: they reinforce sensitivity to the suffering of other creatures; more importantly, they do *not* reinforce brutalization. When the ancient Israelites followed the instructions, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is threshing" (Deuteronomy 25:4),* they affected their own attitudes as thoroughly as the behavior of the ox. And by so preserving their own sensitivities, they could more easily follow another instruction of at least equal importance, "Love your neighbor as yourself . . ." (Leviticus 19:18).

Rules for living with other people, and even with animals, are easier to rationalize than are rules for living with the inanimate world. Continents drift impalpably, soil erodes slowly, and the natural world is so complex that much of it is beyond our direct perception. In ancient times, peculiar gods and demons endowed each region with a special character, controlling its territory according to their whim; mythologies explained what science could not. In modern times, our limitations are hidden by long words: we say that multivariable factors make analysis difficult. We still know so little about the machineries of our natural world that we do what we have always done, learning by trial and error. Our wisdom is empirical.

This wisdom sometimes finds a surprising echo in Scripture. For example, human beings have almost always lived at the limit of their food-getting capacities. Scripture, however, sets limits to agriculture:

> Six years you may sow your field and six years you may prune your vineyard and gather in the yield. But in the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath of complete rest. . . . [Leviticus 25:4]

As it happens, a seven-year fallow cycle coincides with empirical practices of soil conservation. The

Newtol Press, a new contributor, is a professor of biology at the University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee) who is currently doing research in bioethics and the biology of aging. Mr. Press wishes to thank Professor Forest W. Stearns and Rabbi Michael Twerski for their helpful comments on the present article.

* This and all subsequent translations of biblical passages are taken from the 1962 version of *The Torah: The Five Books of Moses*, issued by the Jewish Publication Society.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same plow that breaks the ground to grow food is the plow that endangers the resource base of settled peoples. This technology is restrained by fallow cycles. No science or philosophy is required, as experience alone has brought many agricultural peoples to the same idea. Long before it was known that the earth was full of microorganisms that enrich it, trial-and-error methods discovered that resting the soil preserved its ability to support growth. Especially in areas where irrigation is practiced, and most critically in places where irrigation water has a high mineral content, salty residues must be allowed to leach out of the soil, as they can do with the rains of the fallow year. (Modern technologies have dispensed with the fallow cycle altogether, attempting to compensate for damage to soil with fertilizers, pesticides, and expensive irrigation techniques.)

A jubilee year, a year of blowing of the ram's horn, is proclaimed by the Bible every fifty years. It possesses social as well as ecological functions:

> You shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: each of you shall return to his holding and each of you shall return to his family. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, neither shall you reap the aftergrowth or harvest the untrimmed vines, for it is a jubilee. [Leviticus 25:10-12]

In biblical times the fiftieth year was a social event during which some slaves were freed and land rights were reestablished. It was a happy time whose joyful connotations have come down to us to this day, but also an occasion that forced the celebrants to engage in extraordinarily careful planning to survive two consecutive years without tilling the soil. A jubilee year was a stabilizing occasion, conserving society at the same time that it conserved the earth.

II

If some religious rules relating to ecology appeal to our reason, and even seem advantageous, others appear to be disadvantageous—in the sense that people who ignore them seem nevertheless to do well. Scripture, for instance, gives instructions for the sanitary disposal of human manure:

> There shall be an area for you outside the camp, where you may relieve yourself. With your gear you shall have a spike, and when you have squatted you shall dig a hole with it and cover up your excrement. [Deuteronomy 23:13-14]

This is a good rule for people on the move, and for those whose sheep and cattle produce more fertilizer than they need; it is not so good for farmers of row crops who work the same soil year in and year out. Simple technologies have been developed for the preparation of human waste as a useful fertilizer. For Jews, however, it remains proscribed for religious reasons.

The most disadvantageous rules of all would appear to be the dietary laws. It is amazing that, in a world full of hunger, the food supply of a whole ancient people should have been so radically restricted. Most animals, indeed, are excluded from the short list of beasts whose slaughter is permitted. Some kinds of fish, some birds, and ruminants are allowed, but most mammals and almost all invertebrates are off the kosher food tally. The most famous are hogs, an economical and abundant meat source in most of the industrialized world, requiring only thorough cooking to kill their internal parasites. And aside from the list of prohibited animals, the requirements of ritual slaughter further reduce access to meat.

These religious instructions are specific and detailed. At first glance, they seem nonsensical and arbitrary. Do they make any sense at all, in modern times of hygienic practices, scrupulous meat inspection, and microwave cooking?

Let us begin by considering invertebrates, animals without backbones. Indeed, most kinds of animals are invertebrates, and insects are the most numerous of all. Their fossils indicate a great antiquity, and their distribution an almost universal ubiquitousness. People who have tried them say that they make good eating: grubs and termites are, in fact, eaten today, and an insect product, honey, is the basis of a large industry.

But animals' products are not their flesh. Of the many invertebrates, only a few kinds of insects are permitted as food:

> You may eat the following: locusts of every variety; all varieties of bald locust; crickets of every variety; and all varieties of grasshopper. But all other winged swarming things that have four legs shall be an abomination for you. [Leviticus 11:22-23]

Ironically, this list of kosher insects includes creatures who destroy so much cultivated food that the scant meat they provide hardly compensates for the devastation they cause; their abundance is a curse rather than a blessing. A great mass of insects makes precious few meals. Their small bodies are calorically rich in fat, and can be preserved by simple technologies of roasting and smoking, but it takes too many to equal the weight of an ox, and their distribution is too unreliable for them to be considered a regular human food.

Permitted insects have a few characteristics in common. First, they are large, as insects go. Being a big insect is no mean trick: we rarely meet insects the size of cows because their respiratory tracts are mainly ventilated by diffusion, a process that becomes ineffectual if body size is greater than a few centimeters. Their external skeletons also restrain them. If they were as large as lobsters, they would need outer skins as strong as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those of their aquatic cousins; we might imagine a flying lobster, but the mechanical problems would be hard to work out. For their sizes, insects are marvels of efficiency—much more so than our own clumsy selves—but their very efficiencies restrict their ability to grow into large varieties.

A second characteristic of these insects is behavioral: when they make an appearance it is likely to be in force. Observers have described thick clouds of them that darken the skies; potfuls can be caught (in sticky pits, nets, and traps) without putting a perceptible dent in their populations. They also make their entrance in a "pulse." If you look carefully in early summer, juvenile grasshoppers can be spotted underfoot; several molts must pass before they become conspicuous nuisances in late summer; then, abruptly, their reproductive work done, they disappear, leaving their eggs safely hidden during the cool season.

In all cases, kosher insects are ones that are limited with regard to the times and places they show up—hence, little energy need be expended to catch large masses of them. In addition to these characteristics, insects permitted as food share with most other permitted animals the trait of being plant-eaters.

So much for invertebrates. Of vertebrates, or backboned animals, few again are permitted. Among them are fish with fins and scales; all other denizens of the deep are prohibited:

> But anything in the seas or in the streams that has no fins and scales, among all the swarming things of the water and among all the other living creatures that are in the water—they are an abomination for you and an abomination for you shall remain: you shall not eat of their flesh and you shall abominate their carcasses. [Leviticus 11:10-11]

This prohibition against shellfish is sometimes rationalized by modern hygienists, who especially caution against eating them raw; Scripture, however, gives no reason for their proscription.

All amphibia and reptiles are forbidden for food. Some birds may be eaten—for the most part grain-eaters and barnyard fowl—but not all. Biblical commentators have been quick to observe that contemporary names of ancient birds are guesses, and that the actual identities of these feathered creatures are unknown. They add the caution that scriptural classifications are not modern taxonomies: neither a bat's fur nor its milk disqualified it from being lumped with birds:

> The following you shall abominate among the birds—they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, and the black vulture; the kite, falcons of every variety; all varieties of raven; the ostrich, the nighthawk, the seagull; hawks of every variety; the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl; the white owl, the pelican, and the bustard; the stork; herons of every variety; the hoopoe, and the bat. [Leviticus 11:13-19]

This list of prohibited creatures includes mainly carnivores. Bird-watchers know of many other flesh-eaters that would have to be added to make the list complete. But the bias against carnivores gives us a strong clue to scriptural preferences in general. For when we come finally to mammals we find, once again, that the only ones permitted as human food are plant-eaters, herbivores. And even these are restricted to ruminants:

> These are the creatures that you may eat from among all the land animals: any animal that has true hoofs, with clefts through the hoofs, and that chews the cud—such you may eat. The following, however, of those that either chew the cud or have true hoofs, you shall not eat: the camel—although it chews the cud, it has no true hoofs: it is unclean for you; the daman —although it chews the cud, it has no true hoofs: it is unclean for you; the hare—although it chews the cud, it has no true hoofs: it is unclean for you; and the swine—although it has true hoofs, with the hoofs cleft through, it does not chew the cud: it is unclean for you. You shall not eat of their flesh or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you. [Leviticus 11:2-8]

Herbivores, it is worth noting, are not the only mammals that have been domesticated by humankind. Dogs, the oldest sharers of our campfires, are meat-eaters, and some peoples still raise them for the reputed delicate taste of their flesh. Cat-lovers like to say they do not "keep" their cats, they just share quarters with them. Bears have been known to live with people, too. In theory, then, gentle carnivores could be raised as sources of meat; in practice, it rarely works. The reason is an ecological one: many more herbivores can be kept than carnivores. To understand this, we need a short course in plant-eaters versus meat-eaters.

The food chain that results in most human food begins with producers, green plants that trap a little of the sunlight that falls on them, and use solar energy to grow more plant material. Most producers are never eaten by animals; their remains are decayed by decomposers, bacteria and fungi that break down the chemicals in which the green plants had stored energy. Animals that eat plants are primary consumers: like decomposers, these herbivores are incapable of using sunlight directly, but must obtain their energy and matter from the plants they eat. Being a consumer is no energy bargain; no more than a tenth of the energy stored in a plant can be converted into the flesh of a consumer, and the actual efficiency of energy use is often much less. This inefficiency is ineluctable, built into the chemistry of living matter.

Great masses of green land plants are required

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to support relatively small herds of herbivores. There are subtler reasons than feeding for this difference in numbers: the oxygen we inhale is a plant product, and the carbon dioxide that is garbage to us is taken from our breaths into the energy-trapping machineries of plants. Plants are much more important to the economy of life than animals are. If all the animals suddenly disappeared, the surface of our blue and green earth would change little, since only a few plants depend on animals for their pollination. Without plants, however, almost all animal life would be gone.

Carnivores, animals that eat other animals, are secondary consumers. They are fewer in number than the primary consumers they eat, for a reason that has been mentioned: being a consumer is inefficient. In this case, once again, less than 10 percent of the flesh of a primary consumer can be converted into that of a secondary consumer. And since energy is lost at each level of consumption, it follows that carnivores that eat *other* carnivores must either be small or few.

For people, it makes ecological sense not to eat carnivores. Their flesh, far removed from the solar source of energy, is energy expensive. Their meat is at least a hundred times dearer than the plants that originally trapped the rays of the sun.

Of all foods, plants are the cheapest to eat. Indeed, most people in the world are vegetarians for most of their lives—not out of religious belief but for lack of access to meat or lack of money to buy it. Yet vegetarian diets are not without problems. Modern vegetarians have to be careful to eat proteins. Children are especially vulnerable to kwashiorkor, a disease of protein deficiency. Carbohydrates may fill the stomach, but legumes are needed for vegetarians to consume enough essential amino acids. Most vegetarians are careful to include beans or similar foods in their meal plans, and most distributors of charities to poor countries stress protein nutrition for children.

If we choose to eat meat, we insure our protein nutrition—beasts' muscles are neat packets of protein, yielding all essential amino acids in abundance—but we are ten times less efficient users of our environments than if we had chosen to eat plants. Yet few Westerners are vegetarians by choice. If we can afford meat, we buy it. Our prejudices incline us toward the eating of meat, and these prejudices are not entirely cultural: our digestive tracts are predisposed to meat. As omnivores, we have guts that are intermediate in length between the long intestines of herbivores and the short ones of carnivores. And length aside, the chemicals in our guts also favor meat. Which brings us to the critical matter of cellulose.

No public figure anxious to have tax dollars spent on welfare has yet suggested that the poor be fed grass clippings. Even politicians know that human beings cannot digest grass: the nutrients within each cell of a blade of grass are locked behind a wall that our digestive juices cannot penetrate. These woody walls are composed of cellulose. Wood itself is mainly cellulose, and so is "dietary fiber," which passes through our intestines unchanged. Bran and sawdust can be added to foods as fillers—they take up water in our guts, where they expand and help us to feel fully fed—but they serve no other purpose.

With few exceptions, no animal can break cellulose into the nutritious sugars of which it consists. How, then, can cows eat grass? Listen to the country-music stations that carry commodity prices and other news of interest to farmers: as often as not, they also carry commercials for rumen bacteria. These bacteria inhabit the digestive tracts of animals, like cows, that are equipped with special pouches, or rumens, where they digest cellulose into its constituent sugars. Once the cell walls of cellulose have been digested, nutrients inside the plant cells become accessible to the cow's digestive system, and the materials of which the plants are made can be broken down into chemicals that the cow can absorb.

Digestion of cellulose is not easy, even for a cow. As its jaws move from side to side, a cow grinds its food more thoroughly than the most fastidious hygienist. Grass is milled into fine particles, which present many surfaces that can be attacked by bacteria. The pouch that contains these bacteria, the rumen, is a large chamber filled by many gallons of fermenting food. When a cow chews its cud, it is chewing a mass of food brought up from its rumen to be milled and mixed again by another grinding.

A cow rewards its bacterial helpers by providing a home for them in its rumen while they do their useful work. A rumen is near the beginning of a cow's digestive tract, and this fixes the destiny of the bacteria: although some remain in the rumen to continue their work, most are passed into the remainder of the cow's tract, where their reward is to be digested. *Our* reward, as meat-eaters, is to derive the benefit of their work, and the cow's work, while also refraining from disturbing the general balance of nature.

III

IN THESE days of diets and food fads, good eating usually means meeting nutritional requirements in a sensible manner. Lettuce is a "good" food for people on reducing diets because its scant nutrients are sequestered behind celluose cell walls. For calories, we turn to plants with lots of accessible starch and sugar: tubers with many starch grains and little cellulose; seeds whose hulls may be removed and kernels milled to flour; and tender growing tips of plants whose cell walls have not developed. Most important among human foods are the calorie-rich seeds of annual cereal grasses like rye and barley.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Good eating also means preserving the natural resources we consume. The inability of animals to digest cellulose—astonishingly, one of the few general prohibitions in nature—has preserving value. Not by written law but by natural law are the plants of our planet protected. This law is always in force; no police officers are required to prevent destruction of the plant-resource base upon which almost all animal life depends. Through the preservation of the producers they consume, herbivores are themselves protected.

In contrast, carnivores, the most ferocious of animals, have no such protection. For all their imposing and dangerous appearance, flesh-eaters lead precarious lives. Numbers are against them. Since, as we have seen, ten pounds of vegetarian can support less than one pound of meat-eater, herbivores are many, carnivores few. Whereas herbivores may be "harvested" by human beings and other predators in large numbers, *any* threat to the reproducing populations of carnivores is serious. When we hunt animals for food, we increase the risk of reducing their numbers beneath that critical level at which a population of beasts can sustain itself.

Our efficiency as predators is greater than that of any other creature, and our success in extinguishing entire kinds of animals by our negligence is well-documented. But even were we unconcerned with preserving "balances" among populations of predatory beasts and their prey, we would do well to avoid eating carnivores on ecological grounds. Meat-eaters are far from their energy bases: the energy that drives their biological engines has to pass through plants and plant-eaters before carnivorous muscles can run on solar power. There is thus reason enough to preserve them without being sentimental.

No natural laws prevent us from eating carnivores, as their flesh is as digestible (and as delicious) as any other. Only in the past few generations have we developed an ethic that protects them from us and links their well-being with our own. Scripture protects them by banning their use as food. Among mammals, only the most efficient herbivores, ruminants, are suitable sources of meat.

IV

IN THE Bible, two controversial instructions appear to place all nature under human control. In the first, Adam and Eve are instructed:

> Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth. [Genesis 1:26]

In the second, Noah and his family, having survived the deluge, are told:

> Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth. The fear and the dread of you shall be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the birds of the sky—everything with which the earth is astir—and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hand. [Genesis 9:1-2]

Controversy may arise if these dicta are used to justify short-term exploitation of natural resources as opposed to long-term restraint. But the controversy also finds an answer in Scripture, not only in the clear injunctions against such short-term practices as interplanting (Leviticus 19:19) and reaping to the edges of the field (Leviticus 23:22), but also in the section dealing with the redemption of land during the jubilee year:

> But the land must not be sold beyond reclaim, for the land is Mine; you are but strangers resident with Me. Throughout the land that you hold, you must provide for the redemption of the land. [Leviticus 25:23-24]

Long-term considerations could hardly be expressed in stronger terms. We are stewards, not owners.

HUMANS are the only form of matter that can either ask religious questions or make scientific observations. Yet we know so little of the universe in which we find ourselves, and our efforts to control it are so feeble, that the knowledge we do have seems puny. When answers from science and religion coincide, as in the case of the biblical dietary laws, perhaps it is a sign that we are doing something right.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Heller's Last Gag

Roger Kaplan

JOSEPH HELLER is a writer whose books are awaited and even long-awaited, which is a polite way of saying that after his fantastically successful first novel, *Catch-22* (1961), he proceeded to turn out work very slowly. There is nothing to deduce from this in and of itself —the unparalleled slowness of Ralph Ellison, for example, has prevented no one from recognizing him as a literary master—but it provides an introduction to the fact that soon after Heller's fourth novel, *God Knows,** appeared in the fall of 1984, it simultaneously hit the best-seller lists and was subjected to mixed reviews.

In order to grasp the significance of this fact, it is helpful to go all the way back to *Catch-22*. Upon its publication in 1961, there were a few demurrers, but Robert Brustein in the *New Republic* set what was to become the prevailing tone when he pronounced Heller "one of the most extraordinary talents now among us." Nelson Algren agreed: "This novel is not merely the best American novel to come out of World War II; it is the best American novel that has come out of anywhere in years."

What these reviews and others like them suggested was that *Catch-22* was almost destined to take on a significance beyond the question of its literary merits. Which is, of course, what happened. Not only did *Catch-22* become one of the most commercially successful novels of all time, selling over seven million copies in the next two decades, but its idioms and its characters, especially the hero, Yossarian, and his nemesis, Colonel Cathcart, passed into folklore. People described themselves as being in a "catch-22 situation" whether or not they knew what the original phrase referred to.

This was especially true of young Americans. Heller's "catch" had to do with the conditions under which the novel's heroes, air-force pilots based on a small Mediterranean island, could fulfill their requirements and go home. As the ruthless Colonel Cathcart constantly increases the pilots' quotas of missions, driving them crazy when not getting them killed, the men must put in formal requests to be relieved on grounds of insanity. But since putting in such a request is in itself evidence of sanity, it disqualifies one for relief. For Heller, the utterly absurd situation in which the men of the 256th Squadron find themselves constitutes a definition of the human condition:

> "They're trying to kill me," Yossarian told him calmly.
>
> "No one's trying to kill you," Clevinger cried.
>
> "Then why are they shooting at me?" Yossarian asked.
>
> "They're shooting at everyone," Clevinger answered. "They're trying to kill everyone."
>
> "And what difference does that make?"

Heller stated in a 1962 interview that "the whole society is nuts—and the question is: what does a sane man do in an insane society?" In retrospect, it seems inconceivable that *Catch-22* could have achieved the audience it did until there were large numbers of readers with no direct experience of World War II, readers who might confuse evil with insanity and who might be a little unfocused about the source of evil and what was to be done about it. It is, indeed, almost impossible not to note with ironic hindsight that *Catch-22* began to take off just as John F. Kennedy was proclaiming that the torch had been passed to a new generation of Americans. The rather shallow idealism, the cynicism, and the blustering, petulant impatience of the 60's found expression, in different ways, in Camelot no less than in *Catch-22*.

Catch-22 was a war novel, but it became a canonical work for people who neither knew nor wanted to know what the stakes were either in the war in question (against Hitler) or in the war in progress (against Communist totalitarianism). The idea was beginning to take hold in the early 60's that the values represented by the United States, and the methods chosen to protect and enhance them, were no less absurd than the values and methods of America's enemies. If the whole world is insane, if fighting Hitler at bottom does not make much sense when you consider that men like Colonel Cathcart are in charge and good men like Snowden or Chief Halfloaf (two of the fliers) die for no apparent purpose, then the only rational act, the only moral act, is to desert. This is exactly what the engaging hero of *Catch-22* finally does. Yossarian became the prototype of the draft-dodger of the Vietnam era, expressing perfectly in a few lines of dialogue the point of view of the generation just coming of age in the early 60's:

> "From now on I'm thinking only of me."
>
> Major Danby replied indulgently with a superior smile: "But, Yossarian, suppose everyone felt that way?"
>
> "Then," said Yossarian, "I'd certainly be a damned fool to feel any other way, wouldn't I?"

Needless to say, Heller could not have been thinking of Vietnam

---

ROGER KAPLAN *is an editorial writer for the Detroit* News. *His article on Mario Vargas Llosa, "Beyond Magic Realism," appeared in our December 1984 issue.*

* Knopf, 353 pp., $16.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when he wrote *Catch-22*. The book's vision of World War II, however, coincided exactly with the world vision, such as it was, that came to be expressed in the slogan, "Hell no, we won't go." Heller himself made the connection a few years later in an antiwar play called *We Bombed in New Haven* (1967).

FIVE years after the play, in 1972, came his second novel, *Something Happened*. Here Heller tried to do to the corporation what he had done to the military in *Catch-22*. But unlike *Catch-22*, *Something Happened* is humorless and virtually plotless. Bob Slocum, the protagonist and narrator—who is in fact the novel's only voice—lives in terror at work and at home, but never is the source of his fear explained. The world around Slocum is undescribed, abstract, completely within his own head. This did not bother the reviewers. "Joseph Heller is the first major American writer," Kurt Vonnegut wrote in an admiring piece in the New York *Times Book Review*, "to deal with unrelieved misery at novel length." And according to Christopher Lehmann-Haupt (writing in the New York *Times*), although *Something Happened* displayed "very little of the brilliant rogue humor [and] little of Mr. Heller's verbal wit," it was nonetheless a satisfying successor to *Catch-22* because "you realize that the inside of Slocum's head is a map of male chauvinist America, as damning an indictment of what makes men put women down as the most eloquent of feminist tracts."

One sees in these lines the usefulness of old reviews for revealing the preoccupations of a culture. *Something Happened* was published at the nadir of American self-respect. As one institution after another fell into disfavor among the elites and the educated young, Heller's reputation as a prophet and truth-teller in the shambles of middle-class civilization rose like a bull market. Perhaps that is why Lehmann-Haupt, who seems really to have been rather disappointed with *Something Happened*, was reluctant to say so openly and tried desperately to redeem it as an "indictment" of the "male chauvinism" that was all the negative rage in the early 1970's.

HELLER'S next novel, *Good as Gold*, which appeared in 1979, was another variation on his running theme that the major American institutions are run by idiots and megalomaniacs, that nothing good can come of them, and that the individual caught in them is condemned to moral degeneration and other attendant miseries. Having disposed in this way of the army in *Catch-22* and the corporation in *Something Happened*, Heller in *Good as Gold* now took on the American government in similar terms.

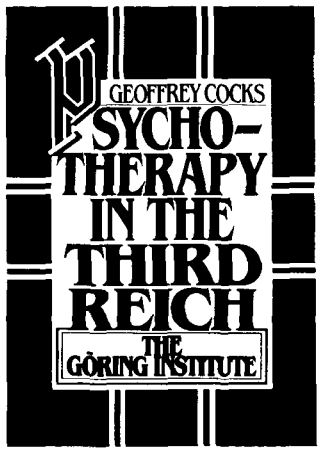
There was, for some, a certain satisfaction to be found in Heller's vicious display of antipathy in *Good as Gold* not only to political leaders like Henry Kissinger but also to the intellectual tendency that in 1979 was beginning to be widely called neoconservatism. John Leonard in the New York *Times*, for example, took note that Heller had "his unfriendly fun with COMMENTARY, the *Public Interest*, and neoconservative careerists of the viler sort." The fact that Heller clearly knew nothing about the workings of government (or of the intellectual life) was no more held against him by most reviewers than his ignorance of the corporation had been held against him in the case of *Something Happened*. On the contrary: the *New Republic*'s Jack Beatty went so far as to compare Heller with Tolstoy, and Leonard Michaels, in the *Times Book Review*, asserted (incredibly) that *Good as Gold* "combined Einstein's theory of relativity with Kafka's agonies."

Good as Gold was also Heller's first explicit foray into the "Jewish question." When the "Kissinger" figure, Bruce Gold, is not being humiliated by Washington anti-Semites, he is suffering at the hands of his large Jewish family. He is set upon in particular by his insanely domineering father (perhaps this is where Leonard Michaels managed to see the influence of Kafka) and his bullying older brother. The scenes with his family are apparently intended to show how American Jews lose their authentic and traditional values by exposure to this country, yet continue to despise and resent those among them who succeed (or try to succeed) in the surrounding culture.

JOSEPH HELLER himself gave little evidence, in *Good as Gold*, of having a Jewish culture of any depth, or even knowing what one was or looked like. What he showed he had, in abundance, was a painful and unrelenting streak of nihilism, which, having been turned successively on the army, the corpora-

"A PRINCIPAL Soviet objective in 'arms-control' talks will be spiking the Star Wars project, and that's because the Soviets don't think it will work and are concerned that we will waste defense dollars on it."

For a free copy of the current issue of National Review write to Dept. C-14. 150 East 35th Street. New York, N.Y. 10016.



Geoffrey Cocks has opened up a discussion which has sent shock waves into the international community of psychotherapists and has already generated attention everywhere from scholarly journals such as *Psyche* to the "Science Times" section of *The New York Times*. His book focuses on a curious phenomenon which has heretofore escaped notice: even at the zenith of Nazi persecution, the profession of psychotherapy achieved an institutional status and capacity for practice unrivaled in Germany before or since. **$24.95**

At better bookstores or to order direct send your check to

Oxford University Press
Box 900, 200 Madison Avenue, NY 10016

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions, the government, and the family, was now turned on the Jews.

In his new novel, *God Knows*, the purported memoirs of the biblical King David, all this is brought to a kind of horrible fruition. For once, though, reviewers are becoming emboldened enough to express in explicit terms the negative judgments they seemed so often unable or unwilling to bring themselves to make in the past.

Thus Christopher Lehmann-Haupt conceded in the daily New York *Times* that "[m]any of the jokes are extremely funny . . . [and] it's even hard to go back to the King James version without laughing," but concluded that "without any seriousness, its comedy seems shallow." A few days later Mordecai Richler in the *Times Book Review* similarly equivocated before ending his front-page review with a long quotation from *God Knows* followed by a lame "Bravo." More confident of his own taste, the *New Republic*'s Leon Wieseltier simply stated, "*God Knows* is junk."

As recounted in the novel by David on his deathbed, the story contained in the biblical books of Samuel and Kings is told anachronistically—that is to say, the narrator freely views biblical history from the vantage point of someone sitting in Brooklyn today. This allows for a certain amount of rather gross Borscht-belt humor, such as when David, remembering his flight from Saul, says:

> The last thing I wanted was more trouble, especially in Gath. What I needed most was a bath and a good meal. The catch of the day at the Philistine inn was water snake and bay eel. I had a beer and ordered some baked whitefish with prawns and kasha varnishkas, and a pork chop with potato pancakes to start.

Ostensibly, however, *God Knows* is concerned with the most serious of themes: David's relationship with God. No relationship in Judaism is more important than that between man and God, but because so much of this is determined by, and expressed through, man's relationship with his fellow humans, life in society or community is what the greater part of Jewish thought is concerned with. To write a book about King David, who had a rather active family and political life, to say the least, and through whom God worked great deeds and spoke, in the Psalms, great words, is therefore to assume materials as rich as they are burdensome. The enormous failure of *God Knows* is not merely, as Lehmann-Haupt put it, that it is written in a voice that is simply not serious, but, more specifically, that its frivolousness prevents it even from grasping its own theme.

What is the source of this frivolousness? Wieseltier believes that Heller (along with several other Jewish writers of his generation) has rendered banal, and in a most offensively vulgar way, the great questions of life—life in general and Jewish life in particular. And it is certainly not difficult to quote Heller in order to demonstrate to what depths of vulgarity he can descend. But we have long since learned that literature has little to fear from vulgarity; everything depends on the uses to which it is put.

Heller, in addition to his unquestionable assets as a writer—a robust, irreverent style, and a fine ear for dialogue and slang—has had a certain fearlessness in his choice of themes and subjects: war and courage in *Catch-22*, the destiny of modern man in *Something Happened*, Jews and America in *Good as Gold*, God and man in *God Knows*. That he has taken on these big subjects is one of the reasons his novels are so eagerly awaited. The problem, and it is one that at least some of his reviewers can no longer help noticing, is that time and again he has raised these issues only to walk away from them, or to stomp on them with a blind and ugly and desiccated fury for which vulgar humor has served as an intermittently distracting cover. He has become by now a kind of icon of our literary culture; but icons are meant to be shattered, and if the reviews of *God Knows* are any sign, there is even some hope that this well-deserved fate will yet befall the reputation of Joseph Heller.

"It is abundantly clear that it was Hitler, and Hitler alone, whose powerful will drove the whole machine of destruction . . . .
a valuable work which puts the record straight and adds many interesting new details to a terrible but still compelling story."
—*Times Literary Supplement*

"An impressive historical account by an author who seeks to bear witness to unspeakable horror and unquestionable culpability."—*Foreign Affairs*

HITLER AND THE FINAL SOLUTION
by GERALD FLEMING
$15.95 at bookstores

University of California Press
Berkeley 94720

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Arms Controllers

DEADLY GAMBITS: THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE STALEMATE IN NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL. By STROBE TALBOTT. *Knopf. 380 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID BLAIR

Deadly Gambits has all the trappings of an important book. Its author is the senior diplomatic correspondent for *Time* and writes most of that weekly's articles on arms control. Within days of its release last September, this purported inside story of Soviet-American negotiations over intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe (INF) and intercontinental nuclear weapons (START) became the subject of many articles and op-ed pieces in major newspapers. It also won the imprimatur of the foreign-policy establishment of the Democratic party—in the second presidential debate, Walter Mondale praised Talbott twice as "the nation's most respected authority" on arms control.

Unfortunately, Talbott is also a highly tendentious writer, in pursuit here of an explicit political agenda. His goal is the ouster of those "hardline" middle-level officials of the Reagan administration, particularly of the Defense Department, who believe, Talbott asserts, "that there is really not much business that we should be doing with the Soviet Union, notably including the business of arms control." According to Talbott, these officials realize that their position is politically unpalatable yet still manage to accomplish their aim of impeding negotiations by disingenuously raising quibbles over the details of particular proposals.

Talbott himself never takes these objections seriously because he believes in the doctrine of mutual assured destruction (MAD), which holds that to deter war the U.S. need retain only the capability to incinerate Soviet civilians. This strategy, which amounts to a threat to commit mutual suicide, is supposed to deter the Soviets from launching not only large attacks against our cities but also a nuclear attack limited to crucial elements of our military forces, or a nuclear attack confined to a West European ally, or even a large conventional attack on Europe. Thus it makes no difference that the Soviet Union has more and better nuclear weapons and delivery systems than do we; those forces have no military use anyway. Talbott writes:

> If either side ever resorted to the use of nuclear weapons, the result would probably be that side's own destruction as well as the mass destruction inflicted on the enemy. What utility nuclear weapons have, therefore, is not so much military as political. Nuclear weapons are the symbols of power.

So he naturally believes that Americans who stalemate negotiations with tiresome questions about verification or about the number and types of weapons on the two sides must be either horribly deluded or concealing their true aims.

ONE of Talbott's crucial underlying assumptions is that the Soviets agree with him that nuclear arms are symbols rather than real instruments of military power. The evidence, however, suggests otherwise. Since SALT I was signed in 1972, the U.S. has deployed no new types of ICBM's; the Soviet Union, by contrast, has deployed a long series of systems with the cumulative effect of shifting the balance of power. In this span of time, they have deployed over 800 new ICBM's of three different types (SS-17, SS-18, and SS-19) with about 6,000 warheads, and they are now in the advanced-development stages of two new ICBM's, the SS-X-24 and the SS-X-25. All these missiles pose a real, not just a symbolic, threat to the American ICBM's in their silos.

The INF negotiations about which Talbott writes were prompted by the Soviet deployment of the SS-20, a mobile, triple-warhead theater-ballistic missile. Since deployment began in 1977, the Soviets have installed about 400 launchers, probably with at least two SS-20's each—a total of at least 800 missiles with 2,400 warheads.

Why did the Soviets build the SS-20 in the first place? Talbott seems to have no idea. To the extent he recognizes the question as a real one, he appears to consider the SS-20 a "defensively conceived weapon" that grew and grew, largely on account of bureaucratic inertia and quite apart from the military or political goals of Soviet leaders. Now that the system is built, he argues, the U.S. cannot ask the Soviets to dismantle it, especially since it is the pride of the Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces.

Actually, the construction of the highly accurate SS-20 does tell us a great deal about Soviet aims in Europe. The SS-20 gives the Soviets a new capacity to destroy a critical number of high-value military targets (tactical aircraft on main operating bases, nuclear and non-nuclear stocks, etc.) in European NATO countries while killing relatively few civilians. This makes an effective but discriminate Soviet attack on Western Europe an even more credible threat than it had hitherto been, and renders even less credible the suicidal NATO threat to retaliate against a Soviet attack on military targets by destroying Soviet cities. During peacetime or in a crisis, the SS-20 makes West European governments more vulnerable to Soviet intimidation.

As a partial response to the SS-20, NATO decided in 1979 to install 572 single-warhead Pershing-2 ballistic missiles and Tomahawk ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe—unless "progress" in arms-control talks with the Soviets made this "unnecessary." This formula was intended to allay supposed fears among the West European publics that an uncompromising

DAVID BLAIR, *a new contributor, is a policy analyst at Pan Heuristics in Los Angeles who has written for the* Wall Street Journal, *the Detroit* News, *and the Los Angeles* Times.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

U.S. was imposing an arms race on Europe. For the Carter administration believed that public opinion would not tolerate deployment unless American leaders first loudly demonstrated a good-faith effort to reach an agreement.

Reportedly, some within the Reagan administration reached the same conclusion, and these men are naturally portrayed by Talbott as the "good guys." For example, *Deadly Gambits* depicts chief INF negotiator Paul Nitze—in an interesting change from Nitze's former image as the "paranoid hawk" of the Committee on the Present Danger—as almost hysterically eager to get a treaty because he thought the salvation of the alliance depended on it. But (and Talbott sees this as unfortunate) advisers who were not so eager for just any agreement were the chief decision-makers of the Reagan administration's first term.

Talbott assigns the dread label "non-negotiable" to President Reagan's zero-zero option proposal, which would have required the Soviets to dismantle their SS-20's if the U.S. refrained from deploying the Pershing 2's and Tomahawks. The common meaning of non-negotiable would imply that the U.S. offered a take-it-or-leave-it proposal and refused to discuss it further; but the administration set no such conditions. Talbott uses the term simply as a buzz word meaning that the Soviets have said or are likely to say *"nyet"* to the proposal. He considers the charge of "non-negotiability" to be a serious indictment of American policy—even though he realizes that public pressure on the U.S. just to "talk" with our adversaries gives the Soviets tremendous leverage in any negotiations, and that in the INF negotiations they used this leverage by threatening many times to walk out if there were any signs that NATO was beginning deployment. (They eventually did leave in December 1983 when NATO deployed its first Pershing 2's.)

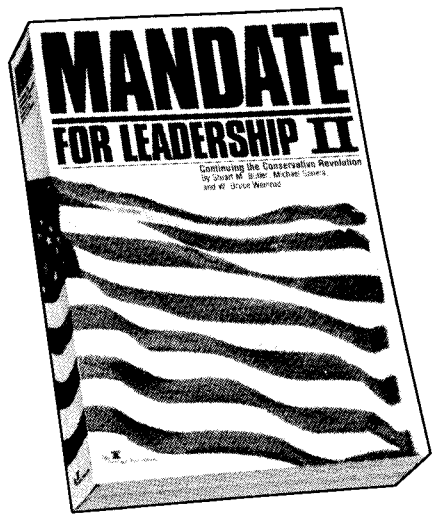
TALBOTT's negotiating logic would, in fact, place a prior restriction on any American proposal, namely, that it first be vetted by domestic critics (like himself) who would pass judgment on its acceptability to the Soviets. This misconception (to put it kindly) about fruitful negotiating strategy ties in neatly with Talbott's strange version of the "action-reaction" theory of an arms race. The Soviets, in his reading, react to vague American musings about future weapons systems by *prior* deployment of systems of their own. Thus Talbott repeats, with favorable comment, the Soviets' own claim that the two new ICBM's they are testing, the SS-X-24 and SS-X-25, are but a reaction to plans for the MX, to talk of a mobile Midgetman missile, and to the prospect of deployment of American missiles in Europe. The truth, of course, is the opposite: the MX and Midgetman are responses to the SS-18's and SS-19's the Soviets built in the 1970's and the Pershing 2 and cruise missiles were a reply—and a quite inadequate one—to the threat posed by the SS-20's.

The practice of justifying several

"...One of the people it's been most useful to and used by is me."

Ronald Reagan

on Mandate for Leadership I



The election is over but not the revolution

The conservative revolution continues. The Heritage Foundation again leads the way.

Four years ago Heritage published **Mandate for Leadership**, the best-selling book acclaimed by UPI as ". . . a blueprint for grabbing the government by its frayed New Deal lapels and shaking out 48 years of liberal policies." Indeed, within one year the Reagan Administration implemented over 62% of the recommendations.

More than 250 individuals contributed to **Mandate II**, which is available in 578-page softcover from The Heritage Foundation, Dept. F, 214 Massachusetts Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, for $14.95 prepaid.

The Heritage Foundation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Soviet systems as a response to one real or hypothetical Western system forms, indeed, the basis of Soviet negotiating and propaganda strategy. For example, in the INF talks the Soviets have demanded to be compensated for 162 British and French missiles. But the British have no land-based nuclear missiles and the French have only 18, all with single warheads. So the Soviets want to count British and French submarine-based missiles—even though comparable *Soviet* submarine-based missiles, which could have a great military effect in Western Europe, are not on the table, and even though the British and French nuclear forces had already been considered when the U.S. accepted in SALT I a Soviet force larger than the American. Talbott never labels such Soviet demands as "non-negotiable."

ACCORDING to *Deadly Gambits*, Paul Nitze accepted the job of chief American INF negotiator on the condition

> that there be an understanding in the government that a final agreement would perforce be lopsided in favor of the Soviet Union because of the sheer numbers involved. There was no way, given the advantage that the Soviets already possessed and given the shakiness of the alliance, to restore complete equality in the European balance.

Talbott sees this as sensible advice and approves of the resulting negotiating strategy: to convince the Soviets that, since about 75 triple-warhead SS-20's could hit all the "worthy" targets in NATO and accomplish all Soviet military goals, there was no need to keep 300. In other words, the lure was that the Soviets could get a much lower U.S. deployment (and possibly none at all) in exchange for no actual reduction in their own military capability.

Whether or not Talbott's analysis of the marginal value of the SS-20, let alone his reporting of Nitze's real views, is correct, his own endorsement of the argument perfectly illustrates the MAD approach to arms control. Any discussion of the military balance, not to speak of the advantage built up by the other side over the last fifteen years, is seen as ridiculous and irrelevant.

Deadly Gambits criticizes President Reagan and his advisers for viewing the world as a "Manichean struggle between the superpowers." But Talbott also believes in a world of demons and angels. The "Prince of Darkness" in Talbott's story is Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, who is represented as constantly scheming to shoot down State Department proposals while disingenuously offering proposals of his own that he knows the Soviets will never accept. (Of course, Talbott gives no credence to Perle's arguments, although they rely on detailed analyses of the military effects of the proposals.) Other demons he hopes to exorcise are Edward Rowny, chief U.S. negotiator at START; Fred Iklé, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; and possibly Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger himself.

Some within the Reagan administration reportedly see reaching an arms-control agreement, almost any agreement, as the prime goal of the second term. Obviously, many of these people leaked material to Talbott and are now using his book to further their aims; within a week after the election, unnamed officials of the State Department and the White House told the New York *Times* that Weinberger and Perle need to be replaced if the "effort to revive arms-control negotiations" is to succeed. That Talbott is thus in effect a participant in a bureaucratic war inside the Reagan administration should suffice to cast a long shadow of doubt over his claim to be a dispassionate and objective observer.

But even apart from Talbott's own political preferences, and apart too from his adherence to the doctrine of mutual assured destruction, his account cannot be trusted. Under standard journalistic practice, direct quotations should be checked with the person quoted. Many of the "bad guys" of Talbott's book have denied they ever said what Talbott attributes to them; this suggests that the quotations came not from them but from bureaucrats hostile to them. (Talbott rarely discloses his sources.) And when he cannot find a quote he needs, Talbott is not above confiding what Perle, Rowny, or Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin really "thought." These are the techniques of a novelist or political pamphleteer, not of a responsible journalist, and certainly not of someone with any claim to be the "nation's most respected authority" on arms control.

The Doomed

THE CHRONICLE OF THE LODZ GHETTO 1941-1944. Edited by LUCJAN DOBROSZYCKI. *Yale. 550 pp. $35.00.*

Reviewed by MAURICE FRIEDBERG

THREE literary works, written in as many languages, have attempted to evoke the outward atmosphere of near-normalcy that was the species of horror peculiar to the ghetto of Lodz, Poland's second largest city, where over 200,000 Jews were hermetically sealed off in May 1940. The best known of them is *Jacob the Liar,* a novel by Jurek Becker, an inmate of the Lodz ghetto in early childhood who after the war became, incongruously, an East German author. The other two are Chava Rosenhaft's Yiddish novel, *The Tree of Life,* and Leslie Epstein's *King of the Jews.* Both focus on the enigmatic figure of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the man the Nazis appointed ghetto leader and "Eldest of the Jews," thus creating the illusion that the Jews themselves might have some say in their ultimate fate.

It was in great measure a result of the success of this deception that the slaughter of nearly all the ghetto's inhabitants (fewer than a thousand, or half of 1 percent, lived to be liberated in 1944) could proceed in so systematic and orderly a way. But then, the lie was believed because the doomed Jews of Lodz wanted to believe that survival was possible—even if only at a very high cost and even if only for the young and sturdy and, above all, those able to earn the right to live by the sweat of their brow. Indeed, even today, with the benefit of

MAURICE FRIEDBERG *is professor of Russian literature at the University of Illinois, Urbana.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hindsight, it still makes sense that these should have survived. Surely, under the prevailing conditions of an extreme labor shortage, it would have served the German national interest and the Nazi war effort to spare the lives of productive workers in the ghetto. But, however irrationally, spared they were not.

The same suggestion of irrationality hovers over this book, a pedestrian and matter-of-fact contemporary account of daily life in the ghetto of Lodz between January 1941 and July 1944. The final entries in this chronicle were made as the Nazis hurried to send off to the gas chambers as many of the ghetto's surviving Jews as they could possibly handle. The German armies were then already in full retreat before advancing Soviet troops just a hundred miles away; German casualties were heavy. But this was not allowed to interfere with the task of murdering the last Jews in Poland's last remaining ghetto. German cities were themselves in flames, and much of Poland had been liberated from Nazi occupation, when a train left Lodz on August 28, 1944. Aboard were Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the Eldest of the Jews, and members of his family. Its destination was Auschwitz.

DEATH and evil and suffering are commonly associated with accounts of the Holocaust, and also cruelty and indifference, and, very occasionally, heroism and charity. In reading the annals of the ghetto of Lodz yet another term comes to mind: madness. Even the manner in which the chronicle was written strains credulity. It is not the secret work of an individual intent on leaving to posterity an account of Jewish martyrdom and an indictment of Nazi crimes. Rather, it is, incredibly, the product of a collective effort, spanning a period of several years, by a team of a half-dozen writers, some of them native Polish Jews and others German-speaking Jewish intellectuals deported from the West; their aim was to record, as dispassionately as effort might permit, the day-by-day travail of the ghetto.

The Germans were apparently unaware of the chronicle's existence, and there was always the danger of exposure. Hence, the Nazis' activities—including mass slaughter and other atrocities—were most often referred to in euphemisms, passed over in silence, or presented as natural calamities and acts of God.

Another reason for self-censorship on the part of the chroniclers was that their enterprise was, incongruously, sponsored by the *Judenrat,* the Nazi-appointed Jewish council. The writers were, in fact, its paid functionaries, and even benefited from somewhat higher food rations than those allotted to the ghetto's ordinary inmates. There is evidence that the Eldest of the Jews read issues of the chronicle (each day's entry consisted of up to several typewritten Polish or German pages); if so, he invariably found himself portrayed as a kind of wise protector of the ghetto, its guardian angel. Rumkowski appears to have firmly believed that history would ultimately vindicate his policy of cooperation with the Nazis; it may well be that through his patronage of the chronicle, he intended to preserve for generations to come his own version of the ghetto's long agony.

Individual daily entries give information about the weather and potato rations, suicides and petty crime, occasional weddings and even concerts of classical music. Sandwiched between these may be an inconspicuous reference to the round-up of yet another group of thousands of people—at first, the old and the infirm and the children, and then also more and more Jews "earning their keep"—for the purpose of "resettlement." (The authors of the chronicle were, it seems, quite unaware that the deportees' destination, usually described as unknown, was not another ghetto or labor camp but extermination centers where they were killed with gas.) Then, on the following day, the chronicle might record the work of the sanitation department or the price of coal. Throughout the document, there are innumerable references to starvation and disease. Some 60,000 Jews died in Lodz of such "natu-

MARTIN GILBERT

THE JEWS OF HOPE

THE PLIGHT OF SOVIET JEWRY TODAY

"I cannot forget the words spoken by a young Leningrad Jew when the moment came to say goodbye for the last time. As the icy wind blew in our faces he remarked softly: 'Do not forget us.'" —from *The Jews of Hope*

In 1983 Martin Gilbert traveled to the Soviet Union to meet the "refuseniks," those Jews whose applications for emigration had been rejected. In **The Jews of Hope** Gilbert skillfully blends a discussion of the continuing pattern of Soviet repression and persecution with the personal histories of these courageous men, women, and children. This moving, passionate book fulfills Gilbert's promise to spread their message throughout the world.

"An important book which deserves to be read by anyone who cherishes human freedom and human dignity" —Senator Daniel P. Moynihan

$15.95

Elisabeth Sifton Books • VIKING

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ral" causes. Of the team that produced the chronicle, roughly half died of hunger and illness, with the other half murdered. One survived.

LUCJAN DOBROSZYCKI, an established historian in Poland prior to his departure in the late 1960's, and now a Senior Research Associate of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, is himself a survivor of the Lodz ghetto. The volume now made available in English draws on much of his earlier research and also on the work of other scholars. It is especially valuable for its full use of Polish and Yiddish primary sources and secondary literature that remain beyond the reach of most Western scholars unable to read these languages. Dobroszycki's contribution to the book is twofold, an introductory essay of some seventy pages and hundreds of valuable notes scattered through the text.

One issue Dobroszycki attempts to deal with is the failure of the Jews of Lodz to mount any armed resistance even when there could no longer be much doubt about the Nazis' ultimate intentions. Why was there no ghetto uprising, as there was in Warsaw and in Bialystok and elsewhere; no major instance of sabotage; no escapes to the countryside to join anti-Nazi guerrillas? Indeed, why was there in Lodz, in striking contrast to other Polish cities, only a single instance of Jews being hidden outside the ghetto by Gentile friends? (The single exception involved two half-Jewish boys saved by their grandparents.)

Dobroszycki advances a number of hypotheses, foremost among them that the city's outright annexation to the Reich (it was renamed Litzmannstadt) and its rapid Germanization destroyed the social fabric of the Polish part of the city, reducing the Poles themselves to the status of pariahs. Thus, in contrast to other cities, no public use of the Polish language was allowed in Lodz, and there were no Polish institutions.

These may well have been important contributing factors, but they hardly explain all. Perhaps a part of the answer is to be found in what we noted at the beginning, the illusion of normality so carefully maintained by the Nazis. Dobroszycki observes in another connection that the ghetto's administration,

> for all its anomalies and absurdity, functioned rather efficiently and provided services that brought the people of the ghetto a certain amount of relief, aid, even order, in those difficult conditions. *There was an apparent, even excessive, normality, and probably nowhere were mass deaths from hunger and a stopgap society so closely coupled as they were in the Lodz ghetto....* Teaching was resumed in some of the elementary schools, both the secular and the religious, and in the gymnasiums and lyceums, where, among other subjects, Hebrew language and literature, Latin, and classical philosophy were taught. Although the Jewish holidays were, as a rule, compulsory workdays, they were observed both privately and in the few prayer houses that had been opened in the ghetto. The rabbinate, a part of the administration of the Eldest of the Jews, performed religious marriages, circumcision ceremonies also took place, and it was even possible to buy matzoh with a ration card during Passover. And finally, the ghetto had a theater and concert hall, to mention but two of its many cultural institutions. [Emphasis added]

The seductive appearance of normality tended to lull people into believing that survival *was* possible, and the hypnotic powers of an illusory normality were enhanced by the existence of the Nazi-sanctioned Jewish "self-government." It did not matter, really, that the Germans themselves hardly took the Jewish Council seriously.

As for the Eldest of the Jews himself, he emerges in retrospect more as a tragic than as a sinister figure, even if his activities ultimately may have helped the Nazis to accomplish their objective with less effort and cost to themselves. Dobroszycki writes:

> It is also unlikely that he [Rumkowski] accepted the post in hopes of gaining material and/or personal advantage.... He was well aware what the German Nazis were capable of, but he believed that, with proper behavior, things could somehow be worked out. He was not alone in that opinion, especially in the beginning. Rumkowski, however, maintained that conviction until the very end.

THE 550 pages of Lucjan Dobroszycki's English text of *The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto* are an abridgement of what was to be a complete Polish text roughly four times as long. Only the first two volumes of the Polish version appeared, in 1965-66. The remaining volumes, announced for publication, were never printed; the Lodz Publishing House, on instructions from the authorities, broke the contract with Dobroszycki and his co-editor. Communist Poland disapproved of the survival of Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967, and this disapproval led to a ban on the further publication of these annals of a Polish Jewish community in the throes of death. But the Jews of Lodz were not to be completely forgotten. Shortly thereafter, a new film appeared on Polish screens: based on a literary classic, Wladyslaw Reymont's *The Promised Land*, the film portrayed vicious and greedy Jewish capitalists in turn-of-the-century Lodz. Thus are the Jews of Poland commemorated in their own land. We, at least, can be grateful to Lucjan Dobroszycki for the monument he has raised to their martyred memory.

Computers and Us

TURING'S MAN. By J. DAVID BOLTER. *University of North Carolina Press. 264 pp. $19.95.*

THE SECOND SELF. By SHERRY TURKLE. *Simon & Schuster. 362 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by JEFFREY MARSH

DESPITE the apocalyptic expectations aroused by the ever more awesome data-handling capabilities of electronic computers since the first ponderous models were constructed around the time of World War II, the effects of computers on our everyday life still remain

JEFFREY MARSH *writes frequently on science for* COMMENTARY *and other publications.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

far less visible than those produced by many earlier and more rapidly domesticated technologies of the past century. Forty years after their invention, the telephone, the automobile, radio and television, not to mention the humble electric light bulb, had all brought about much more radical transformations in the way people communicated, the geography of their cities, their use of leisure time, and indeed in the whole texture of modern life, than has the computer.

The first few generations of computers did of course change the mechanics of many vital commercial activities, from inventory management to customer billing, and did increase the rapidity with which many kinds of information, from airline schedules to census data, could be stored, manipulated, and disseminated. But the relationship between the computers themselves and the population at large, even that segment that depended on their output, remained quite remote. By the 1970's, however, a growing number of users could communicate with computers by entering requests and receiving responses instantly through terminals. More recently, a rapidly evolving technology has multiplied the capabilities and shrunk the size of microelectronic logic and memory devices, so that today, hands-on contact with some offshoot of computer technology—mostly through such special-purpose machines as self-service bank tellers, electronic cash registers, word processors, and video games—is virtually unavoidable.

The culmination of this trend has occurred with the development of the personal computer and its less sophisticated sibling, the home computer. These microcomputers, smaller in size but with greater capabilities than mainframes of two decades ago, have found their chief justification in business applications, allowing executives to perform large numbers of financial and other calculations speedily and independently of their companies' central data-processing departments, and professionals and small businessmen to handle medium-sized billing and accounting functions. The other uses to which they can be put, most notably the playing of games, have led in many cases to a desire to learn more about programming than the rote skills required by the prepackaged software with which the computers come equipped.

As the nature and use of computers have changed, so has the focus of interest of those concerned with assaying their social impact. We have not heard much lately of the once-familiar fear that large computers were a danger to society because of their potential for consolidating huge amounts of data on the private lives of citizens. (Indeed, what limited steps have been taken in this general direction, as in the matching of social-security numbers of government employees with those of recipients of welfare, have been greeted with approbation.) Today's writings seek instead to explore how the growing interaction between individuals and computers will affect the human sensibility. Not surprisingly, the conclusions drawn generally tell us a good deal about the sensibilities of their authors.

In *Turing's Man*, J. David Bolter, a classicist with a graduate degree in computer science, finds in the use of computers a partial return to the modes of thought of the classical era, whose harmonious world of human-centered craftsmanship was almost destroyed by the successive onslaughts of medieval religious philosophy, Enlightenment scientific determinism, and modern industrialism. According to Bolter, the computer, by its constant reminder of the finite availability of time and memory-space, imposes on its user a sense of the limits of human progress and worldly endeavor just when people are most in need of such a sense.

On the way to making this case, Bolter offers a number of useful insights into the nature of language, the relationship between technology and civilization, and similar issues. What could have been a modestly successful essay in this regard, however, is spoiled by his eagerness to tell whatever he has learned about computers, resorting on occasion to semi-incomprehensible diagrams, and to press upon us his jejune version of various fashionable concerns of the 1970's. His suggestion that the computer will make us aware of the need to match our activities to our resources is startling in its naiveté. One would expect even a classicist to know that this is the central point of the major discipline of economics, apart from being a basic fact of life.

Sherry Turkle is a psychologist, and her book, *The Second Self*,

INCHARDI

Novels by J. Inchardi
$15 each

Lines On The Death Of A Fisherman

Three Jews In A Tub

Dreamship

Yurros

A Paper Toy

Intercurse

Jehovah Mafioso

Saturn Maru

Drek Shlak

Om Budsman

Order from **Sirius Books**
P.O. Box 177
Freeport, Maine 04032

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

treats the computer as a psychological probe with which to elicit from its users their beliefs concerning the nature of mind, the difference between human beings and machines, and the relationship between thinking and feeling. Her observations of elementary-school children, adolescents, college students, computer "hackers," and veteran researchers in the field of artificial intelligence lead her to conclude that as computers take on an increasing prominence in the everyday life of society, more and more of us will paradoxically come to learn that it is not the ability to think that distinguishes the human race, but those emotional qualities that cannot be expressed in rational terms. It is disappointing—though perhaps inevitable given the age distribution of those she interviewed—that most of the thoughts recorded by Turkle along these lines are childish, sophomoric, or myopic. Turkle herself, however, reflects perceptively on the way in which the development of machines that can perform mental as well as physical tasks is likely to lead to a diffusion into common discourse of new psychological theories, much along the lines that vulgarized Freudian theory did earlier.

In their desire to discover how the growing role of computers will affect general attitudes, both Turkle and Bolter have felt it necessary to enter the world of those most closely involved with today's computers. The major problem with this approach is its assumption that what is true of today's machines and users will essentially remain true when almost everyone has ready access to computers with capabilities much greater than today's. But consider the degree of technical involvement needed by the early pioneers of flight with their primitive aircraft as compared with today's typical airline passenger in the vastly more sophisticated airliner in which he flies; compare the 1920's radio amateur and his crystal set with today's listener who merely pushes buttons on his AM-FM stereo car radio as he drives. So too, as today's computer professional, be he obsessed "hacker" or IBM engineer, spends hours increasing the internal complexity of his machine's hardware or software, the involvement that will be required of tomorrow's casual user is correspondingly diminished. If the computers of the future are to be as important to life as is generally assumed, both the amount of effort required to use them and the philosophical "weight" attached to their use will be small indeed.

Even today, most involvement with computers is utilitarian in motive, from the electrical-engineering student who sees a lucrative career opportunity in the burgeoning high-tech sector, to the typist (or editor) who needs to acquire word-processing skills, to the financial analyst who needs to be able to run an electronic spread sheet. For some fraction of people, the mechanics of the new skill will become fascinating and they will spend an increasing amount of time developing it; others will learn only as much as they need to; still others will find the whole exercise so distasteful that they will try to avoid it altogether.

The first group is, naturally, the one whom most of today's writers focus on, but the second and third are probably larger. And even among those who do become seriously interested, the period of intense emotional involvement is likely to be brief, in the familiar pattern of adolescent infatuation. The first mass involvement of people and computers, the video-game craze of the early 1980's, produced a widespread and wholly disproportionate response in which there was much bandying about of such terms as depersonalization, alienation, and other familiar bugbears of pop sociology; but the phenomenon itself faded away, like a thousand other passing fads which were similarly decried in their time

If only because computers are themselves so diverse, no generalization can describe how they will affect either their users or society in general. What they all have in common, from the massive number-crunching supercomputers used for research in geophysics and meteorology (and weapons simulation) to the microprocessors that simultaneously minimize the fuel consumption and the pollutant emissions of the newest automobile engines, is the astonishing ability to perform well-defined tasks repetitively, accurately, and above all rapidly, combined with an obedience, stolidity, and frustrating literal-mindedness totally alien to the human psyche. Those tasks which a computer is instructed to do logically and comprehensively, it can do amazingly well; but any ambiguity or inconsistency will lead in short order to failure. When people know how to solve a problem and can formulate the necessary steps clearly, the computer can be programmed to do the job, as has been demonstrated by the so-called expert systems of the artificial-intelligence industry, which have achieved a measure of success in such areas as routine medical diagnosis. But where there is a need for intuition, creativity, or even common sense in the formulation or solution of a new kind of problem, a human novice is better than the most expert computer.

The uses to which today's computers can be put, then, are limited to those which can be taught them by humans. The musings of computer scientists about computers that will be able to teach themselves are not likely to be translated soon, if ever, into real machines whose workings resemble those of the human mind. Computers have indeed been programmed to play chess successfully, and have reached a level at which they can defeat most skilled players, but the style in which the machines play, inexorable, clumsy, but blunder-proof, does not at all resemble that of human players. Even in this highly structured and strictly rule-determined application, programmers have been unable to mimic the unknown way in which the human mind actually tackles problems. Some thirty-five years ago, Allan Turing provided the functional definition of an intelligent machine: one which, placed in a closed room and fed a series of random questions, would be capable of supplying answers not essentially different from those which might be expected from a human. Highly circumscribed though this function is, it is far beyond the capabilities of any computer yet built.

Needless to say, philosophers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

both amateur and professional have had a field day arguing whether it would be appropriate to describe such a machine, were it possible to construct one, as thinking in the same way as a human. But given the gap between this purely hypothetical intelligence and any computer anyone actually knows how to build, the question is metaphysical and practically irrelevant. Meanwhile, as today's more prosaic computers prove able to take up a growing number of tasks to which they are better suited than humans, their users, enthusiastic or reluctant, frequently characterize them in anthropomorphic terms; but this oft-noted fact has less to do with the peculiar nature of computers than with a general human propensity reflected in the naming of such undeniably nonhuman objects as pets, vehicles, and hurricanes.

Significant new technologies do often result in changes in human perception, as is noted by both Bolter and Turkle, but the underlying reality that is perceived is not altered. In this respect, perhaps the most valuable contribution of the computer will be as a source of fruitful new analogies in regarding old problems. In the 19th century, the great moral thinker Rabbi Israel Salanter drew three lessons from the most visible new technology of that era, the railroad: a single instant of delay is enough to miss the train; the slightest deviation from the tracks means disaster; and whoever rides without a ticket will eventually have to pay. From the computer one can draw an analogous set of lessons; the more memory, the better; without logic, memory is useless; and to achieve a result, you need a good program.

Rogues' Gallery

THE LIBERAL CRACK-UP. By R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR. *Simon & Schuster. 265 pp. $16.95.*

Review by JOSEPH W. BISHOP, JR.

The Liberal Crack-up merrily surveys the transformation during the 60's and 70's of traditional liberals, mostly one-time New and Fair Dealers, into what R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. calls "New Age Liberals" (they could as accurately be described as McGovernites). Tyrrell, who is the editor of the *American Spectator,* satirically analyzes their cults and culture, their peculiar social, economic, scientific, and political notions, their wild enthusiams, fads, and hatreds.

Appropriately, Tyrrell starts with the culmination of the liberal era, the disastrous administration of James Earl Carter, Jr. He concludes that Carter was the worst President of the 20th century, worse even than Warren Gamaliel Harding. In his characteristically sarcastic style, Tyrrell refers to the ex-President as "the Wonderboy," which, curiously, is what Calvin Coolidge in private conversation called a much abler but equally unlucky President, Herbert Hoover.

Tyrrell devotes a number of instructive and entertaining chapters to some of the symptoms that marked the degeneration of Roosevelt-Truman liberalism into New Age liberalism: environmentalism, the anti-nuclear movement, the impulse to glorify even the most barbarous regimes of the Third World, consumerism, the so-called peace movement, egalitarianism. One particularly trenchant chapter chronicles the degradation of the civil-rights movement and the rise of "mountebanks" like Stokely Carmichael and Jesse Jackson.

In his concluding chapter, Tyrrell tries to define the common element in all the diverse obsessions of his cast of true believers. It is, he finds, a peculiar species of Puritanism (peculiar because it is sometimes admixed with hedonism). These are busybodies, he writes, determined to harass their fellow citizens and, by force if necessary, make them obey the moral imperatives of the cranks.

Tyrrell's case is buttressed by a good deal of evidence drawn from sources which people like me never get a chance properly to savor. One such source is *Ms.* magazine, from

JOSEPH W. BISHOP, JR. *is Sam Harris Professor of Law at the Yale Law School.*

From shtetl
to kibbutz and metropolis

The Transformation of the Jews

CALVIN GOLDSCHEIDER & ALAN S. ZUCKERMAN

In the 19th century, three-quarters of the world's Jews lived in European shtetls. Today, fully two-thirds live in Israel and the United States. Sociologist Goldscheider and political scientist Zuckerman chart the social, political, and economic changes that have accompanied this demographic transformation. Their unique approach encompasses all Jews, not just the elites, and they challenge the commonly held assumption that the process of modernization has led to increased assimilation. It has, rather, redefined the Jewish sense of community.

"**A landmark contribution**...long overdue and much needed as a corrective to the constrained vision of Jewish studies and the neglect of much general historical scholarship. It is stunning in its sweep and achievements."—Ira Katznelson, New School for Social Research

$24.95

Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism, edited by Jacob Neusner

The University of Chicago Press

5801 Ellis Avenue, Chicago IL 60637

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which Tyrrell has culled a number of astonishing quotations, including defenses of sado-masochism and other odd types of sexuality—e.g., "If hostility to men causes lesbianism then . . . in a male-dominated society lesbianism is a sign of mental health." (In a recent issue of the Yale *Law & Policy Review*, I myself recently came across the statement by an ultrafeminist author that "One might ask . . . not why some women embrace explicit sado-masochism, but why any women do not.") Another is the *Village Voice*, from whose pages Tyrrell brings us the thoughts of Anna Mayo, resident anti-nuclear columnist and adept of the view that nuclear-power plants produce dreadful diseases and birth defects and could devastate the country at any moment.

Among the individuals Tyrrell anatomizes, as a professor of law I admired particularly his deft dissection of two of my own trade, Ronald M. Dworkin and Richard Falk. On both Tyrrell employs his favorite technique of destruction, verbatim quotation. Dworkin, a legal philosopher and leading advocate of egalitarianism, is cited for his curious belief that "A more equal society is a better society, even if its citizens prefer inequality." (Tyrrell forbears to note that Dworkin has not given his own substantial fortune to the poor. There are a good many limousine leftists among the New Age liberals but few or no Saint Francises.) From Richard Falk, a professor of international law at Princeton, Tyrrell quotes at length a panegyric on the Ayatollah Khomeini, who according to Falk, "has had considerable involvement in human-rights activities" (as the persecuted followers of the Bahai religion would no doubt be happy to testify) "and is committed to a struggle against all forms of oppression . . . with a strong belief in minority rights."

One of the incidental joys of *The Liberal Crack-Up* is the service it performs as a treasury of where-are-they-now information. I learned, for instance, what became of the one-time civil-rights leader Floyd McKissick and of the $37 million the taypayers sank into his Soul City, North Carolina; of Rennie Davis, one of the so-called Chicago Seven, who went on to discover that "the practical method to end poverty, racism, sexism, imperialism" was Maharaj Ji's Divine Light Mission; and of Jerry Rubin, who took up Esalen and yoga before succumbing to the allures of Wall Street.

Most of the time I find myself in agreement with Tyrrell, even with respect to his at first somewhat startling assessment of Carter as a worse President than Harding. Harding was not gifted intellectually (H.L. Mencken referred to him as "the Marion Stonehead"); he knew next to nothing of economics or international affairs; and he appointed a few crooks to fairly high office. But unlike Carter he was innocent of messianic impulses, he had enough sense to leave really important matters to really able men. He did far less harm than Carter to the country. I do question, on the other hand, Tyrrell's judgment that Jesse Jackson is a "mountebank"; he actually seems to me more sinister than that.

The Liberal Crack-Up is not without its faults, including a tendency to exaggeration, perhaps endemic to satire. And it has its omissions: Tyrrell's catalogue of muddleheaded clergymen seems not quite complete without mention of such specimens as the Reverend William Sloane Coffin, Jr. and the Right Reverened Paul Moore. In his concluding chapter he might have added that many New Age liberals resemble the old Puritans as well in being killjoys, anxious to make life less enjoyable for the rest of us. The militant feminists, for example, seem hostile to heterosexual love, while the anti-nuclear activists seem positively to resent light and heat.

Tyrrell's style, moreover, is too heavily and too obviously influenced by the greatest of all American polemicists, H.L. Mencken. But this, at least, is an error in the right direction. More people ought to try to write as well as Mencken, and if Tyrrell incidentally encourages such an effort he will have performed yet another valuable service in addition to the one he has rendered in parading before us so entertainingly this gallery of today's rogues and fools.

Social Change

THE MINIMAL SELF: PSYCHIC SURVIVAL IN TROUBLED TIMES. By CHRISTOPHER LASCH. *Norton. 317 pp. $16.95.*

Reviewed by LARRY D. NACHMAN

There is much to admire in the work of Christopher Lasch. He has constructed wonderfully exact criticisms of the presumptions and intrusions of those agencies of social control which are called, in the current jargon, the human services. He has penetrated their "mask of rectitude" and measured the costs of their benevolence in the loss of the individual's confidence in his own judgment and of his freedom to determine for himself the substance of his private life. A man of the Left, Lasch has distanced himself from many of the follies of the contemporary Left. He has, for instance, defended the family against its present-day detractors and he has ridiculed assaults on high culture and rational inquiry. Such heterodoxies have made him frequently the object of those venomous and unrestrained attacks which the Left reserves for its wayward own. Moreover, he is—and today these virtues can no longer be taken for granted—an intellectually honest writer of marked civility.

Lasch's new book, *The Minimal Self*, is closely related to his previous work, *The Culture of Narcissism*, which was a surprise best-seller and the recipient of an extraordinary presidential endorsement when it was recommended to a national television audience in Jimmy Carter's "malaise" address. Both books are marked by Lasch's immersion in psychoanalytic thought. What distinguishes Lasch from others who have used psychoanalysis to inform their social analysis and criticism is that he has not relied on those psychoanalytic thinkers, such as Reich, Fromm, and Freud himself, whose work incorporates a social theory. He has turned, instead, to recent technical, clinical

LARRY D. NACHMAN *is professor of political science at the College of Staten Island. He is currently working on a book about psychoanalysis and social theory.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

works whose focus is personality development. Such works rarely reflect the broad cultural interests which were so characteristic of the first generations of psychoanalysts.

In particular, Lasch has taken a clinical entity, the narcissistic personality disorder, as virtually a cultural type. The narcissistic personality, according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, has simultaneously an "exaggerated sense of self-importance" and very little self-esteem. These are self-absorbed people, but the self that absorbs them is painfully weak and fragile. They are harried by unrealistic expectations and driven to search for substitutes for those satisfactions which reality can never provide. Our society, Lasch believes, tends to produce this disorder and, more importantly, affects all of us with its traits.

In *The Minimal Self*, Lasch provides a much fuller account than he did in *The Culture of Narcissism* of the psychoanalytic principle upon which he bases his critique of American social life. (It is America about which Lasch is always writing.) And more so than in his previous book, Lasch seeks to answer the question, what are the social conditions which generate these masses of impoverished selves in lifelong pursuit of a chimera? The roots of our woes, he finds, are to be discovered in the world of mass consumption, mass production, and technology forced upon us by the directors of advanced industrial capitalism.

UNFORTUNATELY, Lasch's social analysis is not as careful or well-thought-out as are his psychoanalytically-based arguments. *The Minimal Self* begins with an account of the destructiveness of 20th-century life which culminates in a chapter on the Holocaust. Lasch respects the integrity of this history and understands the danger of reducing Auschwitz to a metaphor. But he believes that the Holocaust exemplifies the dangers of modern society:

> But if it is unwise and even morally obtuse to make facile comparisons, it seems equally unwise to ignore the growing destructiveness in modern society as a whole or the possibility that all these atrocities—however incommensurable in their origins and specific effects—prefigure even more radical atrocities, including, perhaps, the annihilation of humanity itself.

Lasch includes in his list of atrocities not only those perpetrated by the Nazis but those perpetrated by Stalin and the Khmer Rouge. This might be considered something of an advance, since Lasch's social criticism here and in his earlier books has been directed against capitalist societies which, he has charged, have brought upon us the ills of our time. But Stalin was not a capitalist and Pol Pot did not preside over a modern society. Frequently, when reading Lasch, one must wonder whether the social phenomena and historical events he describes are peculiar to capitalist societies or are common to modern social life. Or are they linked only by the fact that they happened to occur in the 20th century? The point is that Lasch does not support his own position. He has yet to show that what he criticizes is the result of the specific social system epitomized by the United States.

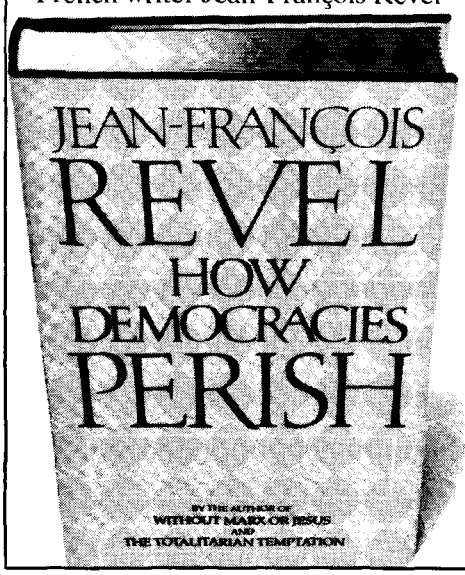
Let me carry the argument a step forward. It is difficult to recover the initial reactions of those who lived through the calamities of our century. But many of them sensed not that something new and monstrous but that something old and monstrous was occurring, and the fact that it was old added to its horror. George Orwell began his essay "England Your England," written during the Battle of Britain, with the line, "As I write, highly civilized human beings are flying overhead trying to kill me." It was not the acts alone but that they were being done by civilized men that provoked horror and wonder.

Orwell's contemporary, the English philosopher R.G. Collingwood, made that horror and wonder the central problem of his *New Leviathan*, a now largely forgotten work of political theory which was "written in great part . . . during the bombardment of London." Collingwood had brooded over the century's calamitous course of events since his service in World War I. As he describes it:

> I realized, dimly and incom-

"Brilliant...Warnings that it would be very foolish to ignore." —John Gross, *New York Times**

In her speech before the Republican Convention, U.N. Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick said: "The American people understand, as the distinguished French writer Jean-François Revel understands, that 'clearly a civilization that feels guilty for everything it is and does will lack the energy and conviction to defend itself.'"



Now the author of the bestselling *Without Marx or Jesus* has written his most urgently important book, "urgent because he believes that the deepest danger to democracy is that it will acquiesce in its own defeat... Revel has few if any equals among his countrymen as a trenchant commentator on current affairs."—*New York Times**

"Truthful and terrifying," says Allen Drury. "Revel casts a cold eye on the intellectual side of our present danger," writes George F. Will. "His book is a firebell in the night."

At bookstores everywhere
DOUBLEDAY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pletely, what the situation was that had been confronting us; namely what I should now describe as a new form of barbarism.

He defined barbarism as:

> Hostility toward civilization: the effort, conscious or unconscious, to become less civilized than you are, either in general or in some special way, and, so far as in you lies, to promote a similar change in others.

For such writers, and for large numbers of their readers, the destructiveness of the 20th century was not a logical outcome of modern society but a betrayal of the civilized values which it incorporated. Those generations may have been naive to believe in the first place that they had left mass destruction behind them, but that they so believed is testimony to what they thought was the real nature of the modern world.

The social and political institutions of totalitarianism are new. But unrestrained mass slaughter does not belong only to our age. Thucydides tells us how, after the fall of Plataea, each of its citizens was asked by the Spartan conquerors, "Have you done anything to help the Spartans and their allies in the war?" After the inevitable answer, "No," the Plataean was put to death. The women were taken to be slaves and the city razed to the ground. To balance the account, Thucydides later tells of the Athenian treatment of Melos. All the men of military age were put to death and the women and children reduced to slavery. From another historical tradition, in I Samuel 22, we are given an example of a dreadful practice when Doeg the Edomite smites Nob, the city of the priests, and puts every living thing to death, "men and women, children and babes in arms, oxen, asses, and sheep."

It is difficult to find a time and a place where such things did not happen. And we find that people manage to get the gruesome job done even without the benefit of modern technology. But if mass murder is not new, what may be new is that we have come to think that such acts are wrong. I am not suggesting that moderns have become, in their conduct, morally superior to their ancestors, rather that we insist upon giving moral content to acts that were until recently regarded as the way things are.

PERHAPS I am wrong in this matter. Nevertheless, it points to an obligation which Lasch has skirted in his steadily growing body of indictments of modern society, namely, the obligation to show clearly and persuasively that the institutions and practices he condemns are indeed distinctively modern and are precisely the causes of the evils that he perceives in our society.

Nowhere is such a showing more needed than in Lasch's critique of technology. It is in this critique that his quiet Marxism makes itself felt. Technology, according to Lasch, is the mode of production which determines all social relations. Technology robs people of their freedom and self-confidence as they become dependent upon complex mechanisms of whose fundamental structures they remain ignorant. Technology concentrates power in the hands of those who control its production and use. Technology, which makes people less independent, paradoxically and insidiously suggests to them unrealistic possibilities of mastery of their environment. Finally, adaptation to technology sets the stage for that mode of deference to experts which enables agencies of social service and social control to expand their power.

As I sit here happily staring at the screen of my word processor while listening to Bach played through my stereo, it is hard not to yield to the temptation to defend technology against Lasch's criticisms. Harder is it still to resist when I summon up images of how my grandparents lived. But it is more important to bring out a paradox in Lasch's own thought.

Lasch argues eloquently that:

> The crowning indictment of industrial civilization is not merely that it has ravaged nature but that it has undermined confidence in the continuity and permanence of the man-made world by surrounding us with disposable goods and with fantastic images of commodities.

IF THIS is so, then is it any less so that men need some measure of continuity and permanence in their social relations? Lasch's radical criticisms imply both the need and the capacity to make changes in the fundamentals of our social life. One does not have to be inflexibly conservative to wonder what happens to people's sense of the world and of themselves when radical social experimentation leads them to regard their basic social arrangements as disposable. Surely one of the things that gave people that independence and confidence in their own judgment that Lasch cherishes was that, with time and experience, they grew to know the ways of the world; they came to know what was done and what was not done. Clearly, however, as social change becomes more frequent and cuts more deeply, one ceases to move through a world whose boundaries are familiar.

Lasch writes: "It is essential to question the boundless confidence in human powers that acknowledges no limits, which finds its ultimate expression in the technology of nuclear warfare." But where are the bounds of Lasch's own confidence in our ability to transform the fabric of our social life while at the same time containing and limiting the destructive and unforeseen consequences of our experimentation? Few today perpetuate the 19th-century conviction that there is a technological solution to every human problem. Technology, like most things humans do, solves some problems, creates some, and leaves many untouched. But what many today persist in believing is that there is a *social* solution to every problem, and only ignorance or malice prevents us from enacting it. Lasch is a thoughtful, reflective, serious man who wishes better for mankind, but so are many of the reformers and planners who have been the objects of his severest criticisms. Like them, he has not paused to ask, what is it we can and cannot do and what are the consequences for human freedom of the policies we propose?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HOW TO TALK TO TEENAGERS ABOUT DRINKING AND DRIVING.

KEEPING OUT OF HARM'S WAY.

Teenagers can get into a lot of trouble with alcohol. Even teenagers who don't drink. Often they aren't aware of the facts.

A new view of the statistics shows where part of the problem lies, and can lead to a better communication between adults and teenagers.

Teenagers are in the high-risk group. People between the ages of 16 and 24 represent only 20 percent of the licensed drivers of our country. But that same group is involved in 42 percent of all the alcohol-related fatal crashes. When you think about that, two tragic things are revealed:

First, not all teenagers killed in such accidents are themselves drunk at the time. Often they have had nothing to drink at all, but are passengers in cars driven by teenagers who have been drinking.

Second, teenagers are often on the roads late at night, especially on weekends, when most crashes involving alcohol occur. They are targets for cars driven by people who have had too much to drink.

Some facts about alcohol you might want to discuss with teenagers are often surprising to adults:

- One can of beer, as well as one eight-ounce glass of wine, and one 1½-ounce drink of 86-proof liquor are all equally intoxicating. The risk is the same regardless of what you've been drinking.
- The legal definition of intoxication is based on "Blood Alcohol Concentration" or "BAC." If you have a BAC of .10, you are legally drunk in most states. But for drivers or drinkers who are less experienced, a BAC of .05, or sometimes lower, can be dangerous.
- Even relatively low levels of alcohol can reduce your tolerance to injury, increasing the danger in an accident.

Arm your teenagers with the facts and give them time to reflect on them.

If expected to show good judgment, teenagers are more likely to live up to it.

Please discuss the problem of drinking and driving with your teenagers now, and if you think this advertisement will help, ask them to read it.

And keep in mind, that the best way to teach young people—as they may tell you—is by example.

The people of General Motors care, and urge teenagers, and their parents, to give serious thought to the dangers of drinking and driving. It's something we all can do.

This advertisement is part of our continuing effort to give customers useful information about their cars and trucks and the company that builds them.

GM
MARK OF EXCELLENCE

Chevrolet • Pontiac
Oldsmobile • Buick
Cadillac • GMC Truck

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

© Eastman Kodak Company, 1985 Liberty Symbol℠ © 1982 S.L./E.I.F., INC.

KODAK ANNOUNCES THE LARGEST FAMILY GET-TOGETHER IN HISTORY.

AMERICA'S FAMILY ALBUM.

It's where Kodak will bring together millions of family photos from across the country. All to become part of a historic exhibit at the Statue of Liberty National Monument. An electronic photo exhibit that will begin in July of 1986. And will remain for years to come.

How you can be a part of it.

Simply send Kodak a picture of your family; a treasured old favorite or a photo you've just taken. You'll receive a certificate to display. And an I.D. card to help locate your picture at the exhibit.

How you'll help save a great lady, too.

We've pledged our support for the restoration of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Your check and photo will help us fulfill that pledge.

So send us your picture and be a part of this historic get-together. For the future generations of your family. For the American family. For one of the greatest ladies in our history.

FOUNDING SPONSOR LIBERTY 1886-1986

Keep America's Image. Kodak

For additional coupons, see your photo retailer.

I WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN AMERICA'S FAMILY ALBUM.

I enclose a check/money order for $10, along with my family photograph. I understand this photograph will not be returned to me and will be part of a public exhibit. (Please Print)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone ( ) _____ Birthdate _____

Mail your check or money order payable to:
America's Family Album
Box #23195
Rochester, New York 14692

Principal Family Name in Photo: _____

Country of Origin: _____

Year of first entry into U.S. (if known): _____

Year & Location of Photo. Year: _____

City _____

Country _____

Your participation will help Kodak meet its pledge to restore the Statue of Liberty.

NOTE: You may submit as many photos as you wish, but **1.** Photos (prints only) must be no larger than 8" x 12". **2.** Each photo must be accompanied by a separate entry coupon. If several photos are submitted, be sure each is identified. Simply tape coupon to back of each photo. Do not staple. **3.** Include $10 check or Money Order for each photo. If several are submitted, write one check for total amount. **4.** Kodak not responsible for lost, torn or mutilated photos. Protect photos between cardboard inside mailing envelope. We suggest you send duplicate prints only, which can be supplied by your photo retailer. **5.** Kodak reserves right not to accept photos deemed obscene or otherwise unsuitable. In such case, your money will be refunded only. **6.** Payment must be submitted with photo to be included in Album. **7.** You'll receive your membership certificate and an ID card to help locate your photo. Allow 8 weeks for delivery. **8.** Non-members will also be welcome at the exhibit. **9.** Offer expires December 31, 1986.

LN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED